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"ROBO-JOX"

Written by:

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THE ROBOT WARRIORS

by
Joe Haldeman

("polish" rewrite)

FADE IN

EXT. ARCTIC GLACIER -- DAY (SFX)
Austere TITLES OVER appear at first to be black letters on a featureless white b.g., but the white is actually snow-covered ground, slightly out of focus. It comes into focus as the titles proceed. MOVING along, snow swirling, at first no SOUND but the sighing wind.

We pass ruined machinery half-hidden by drifted snow, the debris from earlier fights. Then fresh debris, some of it still smoking. SOUND of hot metal creaking and popping.

An injured **WARRIOR** (fighter, jock, pilot) comes INTO VIEW. At first we don't see all of his robot; just the cockpit. The plastic is shattered; he's draped unconscious half inside and half out, bleeding.

We move BACK and the warrior's small form shows us how huge his fallen robot is, a hundred-foot red-and-chrome giant. Right now it looks more like an oversized abandoned suit of armor than a fighting machine -- lying supine, arms in the air, one leg torn off. The other leg starts to twitch slightly, the pathetic reflex of a mortally wounded creature.

SOUND of giant footfalls. A shadow rolls across the warrior.

END TITLES

We TILT to show **ALEXANDER**'s robot looming over the scene, even larger, arms folded. Chrome and black, a few dents and burn marks, but obviously in charge. When he speaks, the filtered voice is hugely amplified, booming and echoing --

ALEXANDER
Judgment. I need --

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER'S ROBOT -- DAY

A cockpit/console, clear windows augmented with CRT's showing various close-ups, rear view, and so forth. Alexander (heavy-set jowly strong man, short stubble of black hair) is standing in the center with his arms folded, mimicking the posture of his robot, speaking quietly into a small microphone:

ALEXANDER (cont'd.)
--a judgment. If you please.

On the console, a device lights up that's labeled "judgment." It's flickering between a green "thumbs-up" symbol and a red "thumbs-down" one. The flickering slows, and stops on the red sign.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
Very well.

CUT TO:

EXT. GLACIER

We watch Alexander's robot's foot lift ponderously, hesitate over the fighter's cockpit --

ALEXANDER
You're next, Achilles.

The foot falls. On the SOUND of it crushing the life out of the warrior --

CUT TO:

INT. AMERICAN READY ROOM -- DAY

Hospital-clean white room with machines against walls. **ACHILLES**, a muscular hero type, stands at the center of attention, getting hooked up to his fighting suit. Two white-coveralled **TECHNICIANS**, male and female, hover around him. Also in white coveralls is **TEX**, Achilles's aide-de-camp -- fortyish, craggy, no-bullshit country boy.

Busy busy busy. Our POV in constant nervous motion as the techs float around, Achilles staring straight ahead, answering their queries sullenly.

FEMALE TECH
Make a fist now . . . now the left.

VOICE
(O.S.)
We have a differential of 1.35.

ACHILLES
So what? Right's always stronger.

TEX
What was it last time?

ACHILLES & VOICE
(VOICE O.S.)
One point two eight.

TEX <---------- *along with* ----------> MALE TECH
Ain't no big deal. We need the knee waldo interface checks now . . .

From this angle we can see, off to one side, an observation window. Behind it is an **INSTRUCTOR** with seven **TRAINEES**: six athletic males in their twenties, plus **PETRA**, an attractive young woman.

ACHILLES
Right one first?

MALE TECH
Either one --

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -- DAY
All of the trainees are paying close attention to what's going on with Achilles. Petra's interest is especially acute, perhaps not completely professional. They can hear what's going on through a small speaker. As Achilles speaks we get an ANGLE past Petra through the window --

ACHILLES
(filtered)
Okay . . .

Grabs one ankle and stands gracelessly on the other foot

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
Just don't make me do both at once.

The tech sticks a jack into an outlet on Achilles's knee.

INSTRUCTOR
Calibration of the knee waldos is especially important. Can you tell me why, Wilson?

FIRST TRAINEE
The stress?

INSTRUCTOR
Well . . . more precisely . . .

PETRA
(Her eyes still on Achilles)
An uncompensated amplification differential could cause a sudden torque exceeding the shear strength of the robot's leg material. Especially during change of state. Even jumping.

INSTRUCTOR
That's, um, correct.

Achilles is standing on the other foot --

MALE TECH
(filtered)
Good to four nines, anyhow.

VOICE
(O.S., filtered-filtered)
Try to get five nines.

ACHILLES
Jesus Christ. Lose that fifth nine first step I take. Just think about stepping.

VOICE
(O.S.)
You know the guidelines, Achilles.

Achilles dutifully shifts back to the other foot, but keeps bitching.

ACHILLES
Guidelines go back to little robots.

TEX
Come out of a fight with two nines left, hell, you weren't in no fight at all. Waste of my boy's time.

INSTRUCTOR
He's right, of course. 99% calibration would be rare after any kind of encounter. You just have to be more careful as the fight goes on.

VOICE
(O.S.)
Other knee again, please.

CUT TO:

INT. READY ROOM
As Achilles shifts to the other foot, male tech plugs in the jack; female tech is working behind him, readying a big backpack thing.

FEMALE TECH
Giving you air for three hours.

ACHILLES
Save it. Not gonna let that sucker change state once. Sure as hell not goin' into space.

TEX
Can it, Ace. The life you save may be your own.

ACHILLES
Yeah yeah.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR -- DAY

CLOSE ON FLICKERING OVERSIZE TV: A **SPORTSCASTER** with less looks than brains, and not too much on brains (instant identification). His b.g. is the Death Valley scene we'll see later --

SPORTSCASTER
I gotta say that it don't look good for Achilles today. I mean like Alexander's comin' from six straight wins; he's done the ar'tic gig and the jungle, and he was here in the desert jus' three weeks ago, when he got, uh --

WITH STEPPED-ON LINE, CUT ON TV TO:

(ANONYMOUS) FIGHTER
Big Black Sam, but that don't mean a lot. Sam was a hell of a fighter, but he --

PULLING BACK to the bar, where a couple of guys are not paying too much attention to the TV. We get the TV SOUND and a blurred image sometimes.

FIRST GUY ----(*very much over*)----------›FIGHTER
You wan' someone for this?

--was workin' with a bad arm, damn near a broken arm, I mean what the hell do you want?

SECOND GUY
(beat)
I got no prejudices. I want 'em both to die.

SPORTSCASTER
Yeah, he was pretty good in there --

FIRST GUY
So get serious.

FIGHTER
Good! I mean if he had his arm there would'n'a been --

SECOND GUY
What serious?

SPORTSCASTER
Some people say otherwise, he was just usin' the arm --

FIRST GUY
Four to one Achilles.

FIGHTER
Some people don' know their
(MORE)

SECOND GUY
Thanks a lot.

FIRST GUY

Cash on the line here.

SECOND GUY

Hey, I can pick up the phone, get five, six from Vegas.

FIRST GUY

Four and a half, come on.

FIGHTER (Cont'd.)

butt from their elbow.

SPORTSCASTER

You were his backup.

FIGHTER

So get personal.

CLOSE on television. Sportscaster looking most serious.

SPORTSCASTER

At any rate, we mustn't lose sight of the large picture.

(slowly)

The fate . . . of the state of Alaska hangs in the balance today. If Achilles wins, Alaska and all of her precious resources remain in the Common Market.

If Alexander beats him, the Confederation wins Alaska. Gonna make it a colder place.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM

Again looking past Petra, into the ready room. Female tech is helping Achilles get into the backpack. A tall slim oriental man, **MATSUMOTO**, enters through opposite door.

INSTRUCTOR

That's Professor Matsumoto, who's in charge of ongoing research and development.

Achilles sees him enter and looks away. No love lost between the two.

SECOND TRAINEE

Sir, can they have had time to fix what went wrong in the Arctic fight?

INSTRUCTOR
I don't know any details, of course . . .

His expression says that of course he does.

INSTRUCTOR (cont'd.)
but the word is that Cantares lost because of frozen elbow and knee joints. Not locked frozen, but suddenly slow. Freezing won't be a problem in Death Valley.

PETRA
We'll be fighting in the cold, though. Some of us, later.

INSTRUCTOR
It's fixed now.
(BEAT)
Let's move on down to the gantry area.

They shuffle toward the door but Petra hangs back, still eyeing Achilles. Small smile. Then the people in the ready room all head for the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR -- DAY
MOVING along with Achilles, Tex, and Matsumoto as they head for the gantry. (The two techs following a respectful distance behind.)

TEX
Now this is fine. Just great. My boy gets to be a guinea pig again.

MATSUMOTO
Nothing of the sort. Achilles doesn't have to use the option if he doesn't want to. He must be aware, though --

TEX
Yeah, sure. But --

ACHILLES
Tex, can I say something?
(BEAT)
(MORE)

ACHILLES (Cont'd.)
Thank you. I love getting these new weapons, I really do. But why the hell couldn't you have warned me? Let me try the damned thing out?

MATSUMOTO
The secrecy was not my idea. But there is talk of a security leak. And since this was, well, stolen from the Confederation design, we --

Achilles stops dead. The others sort of pile up.

ACHILLES
Alexander has this fancy hand, the fist that can fly off?

MATSUMOTO
That's correct.

ACHILLES
(moving again)
Good of you to tell me.

TEX
It's just a way to get around the rules, eh?

MATSUMOTO
No, not at all --

End of the corridor; doors slide open --

CUT TO:

EXT. AMERICAN BASE -- DAY
Walking out onto a paved surface. They move toward us, still arguing, following the line of a Hurricane fence.

MATSUMOTO
It's perfectly within the rules.

TEX
First one uses it's gonna get challenged.

ACHILLES
But the other'll be dead by then. If it works.

MATSUMOTO
If Cantares had had it, he might have won.

ACHILLES
If cows had wings we'd need umbrellas.

As they pass us, our ANGLE shifts, staying on Achilles, and now the b.g. includes the bottom part of the robot's huge leg. They come to the gantry gate and Tex uses a key to call the open elevator down.

Remote TV units are in evidence: transparent bubbles gliding around with cameras inside.

The two techs are hanging back, waiting expectantly. The elevator comes.

TEX
(sotto voce)
Will you wave at the gawd damn cameras?

ACHILLES
(teeth gritted)
Hello, Mommy. Hello, Sis.

TEX
(opening gate)
Gawd.

Achilles turns to the techs and they exchange a salute, thumbs up, bumping knuckles together.

BOTH TECHS (UNISON)
Crash and burn.

ACHILLES
Crash and burn.

Past Achilles, we see Tex for a moment. His face reflects jealousy, perhaps for the comradery between Achilles and the technicians.

Achilles, Tex, and Matsumoto enter the elevator.

POV just outside gantry elevator, MOVING up with robot in close b.g. A floating camera is following them.

TEX
We could get rid of this gantry any time.

ACHILLES
Yeah. Just as easy to go up through the leg, check things out. Less of this.

Cocks his head toward the floating camera.

MATSUMOTO
What difference does it make to you? Your last fight.

ACHILLES
Once a fighter, always a fighter. We watch out for each other.

TEX
Besides, it doesn't have to be his last.

ACHILLES
(laughs)
Right.

TEX
Tell me you couldn't use the bonus.

ACHILLES
We've gone through this before?

The elevator stops with a solid **clunk**.

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
You'll have another fighter.

TEX
Not like you, Achilles. No one.

ACHILLES
Aw hell. Gettin' all weepy.
(Looks off into the distance)
Where the hell is Alexander? We should be able to see--

TEX
He took off during the night. Hasn't come back yet.

ACHILLES
Maybe he won't come back. I'll win by default.

TEX
Naw, he jus' wants to grandstand. Like--

ACHILLES
Yeah. He plays for the bleachers.

The cockpit opens and **THIRD TECHNICIAN** crawls out. He touches his forehead and talks to Achilles as if the other two weren't there.

TECH
May be a little lag on the right laser. Give it a couple before --

ACHILLES
Yeah. They fix the ankle joint okay?

TECH
You could dance with it.

ACHILLES
(Holding out fist thumb-up, wicked smile)
Gonna stomp with it.

TECH
(taps knuckles)
Crash and burn.

ACHILLES
Crash and burn.

The tech steps away and Tex claps Achilles on the shoulder with what might be false heartiness . . . .

TEX
Be careful, boy.

ACHILLES
Last one, you can bet on it.

TEX
I did, y'know, bet on it. All I could scrape up.

CLOSE on ACHILLES. His expression shows the gulf between the two men--the "expert" versus the guy who actually puts his life on the line.

ACHILLES
What kind of odds you get?
(BEAT, smile)
Never mind, I know.

He steps over to enter the cockpit

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
(over his shoulder)
Gonna be some brokenhearted bookies tonight.

As Achilles turns away, ANGLE ON Tex: frozen smile.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT -- DAY

A big man in a small place. There are lots of esoteric dials, switches, shuttle-cockpit kind of stuff to the right and left, but the middle area is fairly simple. A large video screen over the "windshield" (more like a bay window) gives the view to the rear. He sits on a kind of a low bar stool with a high back, his feet on the floor, knees slightly bent.

There's a seat-belt/body harness combination that resembles the rig an Indy driver wears: straps that go over each shoulder to clip into the seat belt at hip level. There's a difference, though. These are absolutely tight when they have to be -- when the robot tips over or even tumbles -- but they're like a modern car seat belt in that they're loose when there's no stress on them. So Achilles can stand up in front of the seat, and even walk around for a step or two on either side.

Achilles pulls wires from the simple console in front of him and plugs jacks into his knees, elbows, and wrists.

ACHILLES
Ready for waldo check.

VOICE
(O.S.)
Fire away.

Achilles taps his right foot twice --

CUT TO:

EXT. GANTRY SCENE -- DAY (SFX)

A new ANGLE, the first time we see Achilles's robot all at once. It also taps (stamps) its right foot twice; the ground shakes.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
CLOSE on Achilles's hands: he smashes his right fist into his left palm.

CUT TO:

EXT. GANTRY SCENE
Likewise, fist into hand, but the SOUND is metallic and huge. Then the robot kneels down, gracefully for a machine of its size, and scoops up a handful of dirt -- about a dump truck full -- and rubs it together between its palms, making a minor avalanche in grotesque parody of a baseball pitcher warming up.
He takes a couple of steps, maybe twenty yards each, and picks up a piece of rusted metal about the size of a car. He balances it in his hand; tosses it in the air and catches it --

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
Achilles staring --

ACHILLES
Let's give the bleacher bums a thrill.

The bleachers are on the horizon. We suddenly find out that the window isn't a simple window; we get a quick zoom across Death Valley to where thousands of people sit watching, protected by a force field dome that shimmers in the heat. Glowing crosshairs appear superimposed over the bleachers -- Achilles mimics a wind-up . . .

CUT TO:

EXT. GANTRY SCENE
The robot hurls the piece of junk --

CUT TO:

EXT. BLEACHER SCENE -- SFX
-- and it comes hurtling out of the sky right toward the fans! SOUND of the thing whooshing in and the fans gasping. When it hits the force field, though, it suddenly slows down, glows red-hot, stops, and then slides to the ground (as if it were slipping along a dome of glass).

CUT TO:

EXT. BASE OF GANTRY ELEVATOR -- DAY
Tex and Matsumoto watch as Achilles goes through his paces, having the robot do various warming-up exercises.

TEX
Gonna take some luck.

MATSUMOTO
Always. I think he has a better chance than people are saying, though.

TEX
Yeah?

MATSUMOTO
Much of Alexander's advantage in the past months has been espionage, of course, rather than skill. Now we have a spy in his camp, to counterbalance the one he has here.

TEX
Who'd we get?

MATSUMOTO
(smiles)
The walls have ears.

TEX
Someone who's on top of the daily design changes?

MATSUMOTO
We can hope.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT -- DAY

Achilles intense, light sheen of sweat

ACHILLES
Seems okay from this end.

VOICE
(O.S.)
No problems here.

ACHILLES
Checking visual systems . . .

VOICE
(O.S.)
Tex already did that.

The scene in front of Achilles goes through freaky visual transformations -- computer-generated false-color stuff that looks like infrared, ultraviolet...

ACHILLES
I like the colors -- hold it.

There's a tiny orange spot in the (infrared) sky. He zooms in on it -- larger orange blob -- and then switches to regular light, much magnified. It's like the first pictures we see on TV when a shuttle comes down: small, blurred, washed out. But it's recognizably Alexander's robot.

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
There's Alexander. Flying in.

VOICE
(O.S.)
Like he has power to burn.

ACHILLES
Yeah, let 'im burn it.
(BEAT)
Guess I'll go out and turn on the shields.
Get ready to spar.

CUT TO:

EXT. GANTRY SCENE

We see Tex and Matsumoto scrambling for an underground bunker as Achilles moves out; giant steps but not clumsy, moving with calm confidence. The TV cameras in their force field bubbles bob along with him. We also FOLLOW along the blasted landscape as he moves toward a central position.

With Alexander visible as an approaching contrail, Achilles stops and switches on his force field. Stinger SOUND and a sudden shimmering hemisphere appears around him.

Another ANGLE. Alexander lands like a rocket-braking space ship, twin columns of fire blasting from his feet. He's in a half-crouch wrestler's stance, and his own force field is on before he touches ground.

The flames go out and, in this brief exchange, both men's voices of course SOUND filtered and booming:

ACHILLES
Congratulations. Your feet work.

ALEXANDER
Would you care to try your own? And run before it's too late?

In answer, twin rockets leap from Achilles's chest, headed straight for Alexander. One hits the force field and is deflected to the ground, where it explodes; the other ricochets up into the sky.

Alexander replies in kind, but he fires <u>six</u> rockets simultaneously; they bounce off Achilles's shield and go every which way.

ANGLE ON Achilles from outside, through windshield.

ACHILLES
Nothing with the rockets.

TEX
(O.S.)
Okay. I guess try the cannon.

ACHILLES
(O.S.)
Why not?

He starts firing a cluster of cannons from a place on his chest near the rocket launcher. Like a modern tank's pom-pom guns, but louder and faster. After a half-second --

CUT TO:

INT. BAR

CLOSE ON FLICKERING OVERSIZE TV. The same Sportscaster as before is talking O.S. while we watch the duel in progress --

SPORTSCASTER
So they're holdin' on to the rockets; they both got a couple dozen left. Just in case. Now the cannon.

SECOND GUY
(O.S., mimicking sportscaster)
"Just in case." Why the cannon? Cannon never do anything.

ANGLE showing both guys, TV, bartender watching TV while he washes glasses.

FIRST GUY
They got to be careful. Remember last June, they --

SECOND GUY
Yeah, Tharp versus Bailey. Wasn't cannon, though. Laser shielding.

FIRST GUY
Same-o same. They got to check it out.

SPORTSCASTER
(O.S.)
And now the laser check, if they follow the usual sequence.

SECOND GUY
Yeah, but they oughta change the rules. Nothin' ever happens till they get down on the ground and start tearin' ass.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

POV behind Alexander. Smoking craters, haze of smoke and dust. Alexander fires a laser at Achilles: flickering bright lance that penetrates the force field but reflects off the robot's skin. Achilles moves and the reflected laser beam dances.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT

Our usual ANGLE, over Achilles's shoulder. He's glancing to the left as Alexander lasers him.

ACHILLES
(laconic)
--don't know; got a little local heating, I guess right at contact point. No big deal.

TEX
(O.S.)
Try that new green laser pair?

ACHILLES
Okay.

The window ZOOMS in on Alexander. Crosshairs appear on his shoulder; two bright green laser beams converge there. A little wisp of smoke and Alexander ducks away.

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
See that?

TEX
(O.S.)
Ain't half bad. Get closer, try ta--

ACHILLES
I know.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Cat-and-mouse sort of scene. Alexander is continually zapping Achilles, apparently to no effect. But every time Achilles's twin lasers converge on Alexander, he dodges away.

Suddenly Alexander's robot folds inward, transforming itself into a tank. Achilles does the same thing a second later.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TRAINEE BUNKER -- DAY

CLOSE ON OVERSIZE TV showing same scene, similar ANGLE. Up in one corner, though, we have a SUPER of the scene from Achilles's POV, inside the robot.

SPORTSCASTER
(O.S.)
So Alexander's opting for the tank mode.

JOCK
(O.S.)
He gets a little more shielding that way.

ANOTHER ANGLE shows that we're in a small room with the TV taking up most of one wall; the other walls are bulletin boards with technical stuff like blueprints and charts pinned up on them.

Seated on folding chairs are all of the trainees and the instructor, from before. Tight-lipped silence, thick tension in the room.

CLOSE on Petra, showing evident concern.

JOCK (cont'd.)
(O.S.)
That double laser's pretty good.

ANGLE ON TV screen -- over the heads of all the trainees.

JOCK (cont'd.)
(O.S.)
I never seen a green one before.

SPORTSCASTER
(O.S.)
Su'prise, that's the name a the game.

JOCK
(O.S.)
A course.

CUT ON TV TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD REFEREE STATION -- DAY

Four guys in bland beige uniforms riding a floating platform, protected by a shimmering force field. Each one has something like a small lectern in front of him, presumably with switches that can control aspects of the play.

JOCK
(O.S.)
Gahdamn refs watchin' 'em like hawks.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD
MOVING around the two robots swiftly as they reconfigure into humanoid form. Alexander gropes, trying to make contact with Achilles. SOUND is deafening, Alexander hammering away with cannon and rockets, trying to distract him. Achilles coolly concentrates his laser: if the converging beams stay on one spot for more than a fraction of a second, there's a little spark and a wisp of smoke.

ACHILLES
What's the matter, you? Too warm?
(Alexander growls incoherently.)
Touchy, touchy.

CLOSE on Achilles's arm as Alexander grabs it. SOUND of buzzer -- the refs turning off advanced weapons systems -- one instant of silence -- then Alexander heaves Achilles to the ground with a junkyard crash. Switch to POV behind Achilles as he gets slowly to his feet -- we see him raise his fist in a line with Alexander's robot's head --

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
Through the windshield we see his fist coming up on the right, and glowing red crosshairs appear on Alexander's robot's head.

ACHILLES
Do the fist thing now?

TEX
(O.S.)
Not 'chet. You movin' all right?

ACHILLES
Yeah. That was nothin'.

TEX
(O.S.)
Let's save it, then. Might need it.

ACHILLES
Good. Wanna get in a coupla licks here.

TEX
(O.S.)
That's my boy.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD
Alexander steps forward and tries to brain Achilles with a kick as he's getting to his feet. Achilles ducks. Alexander misses and gets thrown off balance; Achilles lunges and crashes into him, low, knocking him on his ass.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
Looking down at Alexander.

ACHILLES
Now you don't think I oughta --

TEX
(O.S.)
No! You don' wanna rassle him on the ground.

ACHILLES
I could take him.

TEX
(O.S., rapid-fire)
Maybe you could and maybe you couldn't. He's got a edge rollin' on the ground -- you don' wanna give him no edge!

Alexander warily getting up -- Achilles steps toward him --

ACHILLES
Yeah, I guess . . .

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY
A new ANGLE, low behind Alexander. Achilles comes in with a side kick; Alexander stiff-arms the swinging foot. Crash and the scene is frozen for an instant, Alexander gripping the foot while Achilles stands off balance. Almost contemptuously, Alexander shoves Achilles away.

Achilles staggering backwards, not falling. Our POV rises as Alexander stands up. We stay behind his shoulder as he goes after Achilles.

ALEXANDER
You're a dead man, Achilles. Without that laser you're dead.

ACHILLES
Laser's not my only trick.

ALEXANDER
Show me.

Alexander takes a swing and misses.

ACHILLES
Patience, patience.

Achilles kicks out and just grazes Alexander's hip. A loud ping! and Alexander staggers back a couple of steps --

CUT TO:

INT. BAR
The tableau ANGLE (two guys, bartender, TV)

SECOND GUY
Now this is more like it.

BARTENDER
Thought you had money on Alexander.

SECOND GUY
Ah, he's playin' with him.

They all watch as Alexander delivers a heavy blow to Achilles's chest.

SECOND GUY (cont'd.)
See? All the smart money's on Alexander.

FIRST GUY
Real gambler, you.

SECOND GUY
Real gambler don' always gamble --

ANGLE ON oversize TV: Achilles tries to kick Alexander in the groin; he dances away --

SECOND GUY (cont'd.)
(O.S.)
If you get my meaning.

Alexander swings with both fists, misses.

FIRST GUY
(O.S.)
You mean y'think the fix is in?

SECOND GUY
(O.S.)
Hey. What do I know?

ANGLE ON the bartender and TV. He stares at the fight while he talks.

BARTENDER
(with weary authority)
No way in hell nobody is gonna fix th' fights. Yer not just talkin' buyin' a coupla jocks. You gotta buy th' ground crew an' th' refs. You gotta buy the god damn R an' D boys on both sides.

Achilles and Alexander circle and feint while he talks --

First Guy INTO VIEW

FIRST GUY
Hell, you'd have to buy both countries! Buy th' leaders, anyhow.

Second Guy INTO VIEW

SECOND GUY
I ain't sayin' I know nothin'.

He looks away from TV, straight at FIRST GUY

SECOND GUY (cont'd.)
All I'm sayin' is you got enough money, you can buy anything

BARTENDER
You got that right.

On TV, Alexander tackles Achilles --

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD
A very low ANGLE dead on the line of action: Alexander tackles Achilles with an awesome SOUND and they both slide along the dirt straight toward us (this should only be 3-D).

REVERSE ANGLE. Alexander's on top of Achilles. He raises both fists clasped together for the death blow --

CLOSER -- and Achilles's knee flies up and crashes into his robotic groin. He tumbles forward over Achilles's head --

Another low ANGLE -- and Achilles is on top --

We come in CLOSE on Achilles's right hand, gripping Alexander's shoulder. An attachment like a buzz-saw comes out of his wrist.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNKER
Matsumoto is staring at a mosaic of TV screens, dials, lights --

MATSUMOTO
Now . . .

TEX
(timing a little off;
slightly false enthusiasm)
There y' go, boy. Git rid a that arm!

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
CLOSE-UP on Achilles's face, showing strain

ACHILLES
Yeah. Get it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- SFX
CLOSE on buzz-saw cutting through arm. SOUND a shriek of metal biting metal. Sparks flying. Alexander struggling --

ANOTHER ANGLE. With one desperate heave, Alexander manages to throw Achilles off him. Both robots struggle to their feet. Alexander's arm dangles uselessly, cut more than halfway through.

ALEXANDER
That was cute. That was very cute.

ACHILLES
(Advancing)
I have all kinds of tricks.

ALEXANDER
Don't we all.

Alexander raises good arm, pointing toward Achilles --

CUT TO:

INT. BUNKER

TEX & MATSUMOTO
(Tex just a fraction of a second late)
Duck!

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD
The same instant as their warning, Achilles dodges -- and Alexander's fist rockets straight toward where his head had been. It streaks off into the distance.

ACHILLES
Well, well. Hard to win without hands.

LOW ANGLE -- Suddenly Alexander blasts off! The center part of his robot separates from the rest, becoming sort of a plane/rocket, zooming straight up and away.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNKER
Tex turns to Matsumoto

TEX
Gawd damn. I was afraid he'd pull that trick.

MATSUMOTO
(shrugs)
What else could he do?

TEX
Stand and fight.

MATSUMOTO
With only his feet?

ACHILLES
(O.S.)
Gonna go into anti-aircraft mode.

TEX
Yeah, what the hell. Maybe --

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- SFX
Achilles is reconfiguring; arms and legs become braces that hold down the squat anti-aircraft structure.

TEX
(O.S., cont'd.)
-- we knocked loose something,
his shields won't work.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
Achilles clicking switches: fast, competent, sure.

ACHILLES
Or maybe --
(commences firing)
I can
(louder)
overload the son of a bitch.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- SFX
LONG SHOT that shows Achilles, Alexander, and the bleachers. Achilles is using his cannons rapid-fire; Alexander is responding in kind. No real effect from either.

Achilles tries the laser, but no go. Can't stay on target long enough to do damage.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
Achilles adjusting straps --

ACHILLES
I'm goin' after him.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNKER
Tex is somewhat frantic:

TEX
Damn it! That's just what he wants you to do!

ACHILLES
(O.S.)
It's what I want to do.

MATSUMOTO

Sooner or later he has to return to the ground. Why not wait for him?

ACHILLES

Wait for his next trick, yeah.

TEX
But he's --

ACHILLES
You guys take care of it down there.

ANGLE between Tex and Matsumoto: on the monitor we see the center of Achilles's robot launch itself straight up and take off after Alexander. They watch for a BEAT. Tex covers his microphone.

TEX
(to MATSUMOTO)
Someday we're gonna invent a jock with more brains than cojones.

Matsumoto is staring at the screen; un-Oriental smile.

MATSUMOTO
He would lose.

CUT TO:

AERIAL SCENE OVER BATTLEFIELD -- SFX
Dogfight! Alexander sees Achilles launch himself and he takes off in a run, low to the ground at first.

From this angle, we see for the first time that a definite boundary is drawn along the ground, with a band of green toward us and a band of red toward the bleachers. Alexander is flying just our side of the line.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S "PLANE" -- DAY
We're looking down at Alexander, zooming away down the line. Achilles has a thing like a joystick in front of him.

ACHILLES
No surprise. He's hugging the out-of-bounds.

Jet SOUND as Achilles pushes the stick forward all the way; dives toward him. Achilles is pressed back into the seat with the acceleration.

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
(somewhat strained)
Just . . . have to fly up his tail.

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL OVER BATTLEFIELD -- SFX
MOVING over and slightly behind Achilles as he gains on Alexander. He's firing rockets every couple of seconds: they go arrow-straight and then veer away at the last instant. Both planes going faster and faster.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNKER
Tex and Matsumoto hunched forward --

TEX
Those heat-seekers you usin'?

ACHILLES
(O.S.)
'Course they are. He's got some way to throw 'em off.

Tex looks over the monitor, at a radar screen. Green blip chasing red blip along the edge of a rectangle, approaching the top.

TEX
Look, you're gonna hit the north edge in fifteen, twenny seconds. Better go east and up --

ACHILLES
(O.S.)
Right.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- SFX
New ANGLE from the red side. ON Alexander approaching fast and low -- a quick PAN as he flashes by -- then Achilles peeling away and up, afterburners roaring.

POV behind Achilles's plane, and slightly above. He levels off; from this altitude we can just see the northern edge of the field, where the red and green ribbons take a sudden right. Alexander is going hell-for-leather straight toward it.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S PLANE
Achilles concentrating --

ACHILLES
Tex, he's gotta pull up soon. I'm gonna risk saturation.

TEX
(O.S.)
Go for it.

Slight magnification on the windshield; crosshairs appear in front of Alexander's plane --

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL OVER BATTLEFIELD -- SFX

Achilles gives it everything he has! Solid column of tracers -- cannonfire, gunfire, rockets -- and the ground in front of Alexander is an erupting volcano of fire and flying dirt and shrapnel!

ANOTHER ANGLE behind and slightly below Alexander -- he's headed straight for the inferno -- his plane tilts almost 90 degrees as he gooses it up and to the left -- going slightly over the boundary!

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S PLANE

Achilles ecstatic --

ACHILLES
God damn! Did you see that?

Through the windshield we can see Alexander flying away, almost straight up.

TEX
(O.S.)
See what?

ACHILLES
He went out! He went over the red!

TEX
(O.S.)
Saw he was close. Get a judgment.

Achilles touches the mike at his throat.

ACHILLES
I need a judgment. Opponent out of bounds.

SOUND of chime --

VOICE
(O.S.)
Judgment negative.

ACHILLES
What? I saw with . . .
(adjusts mike)
Alexander?

We hear ALEXANDER (O.S.) laughing --

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
You bastard! You know you went out!

ALEXANDER
(O.S.)
Try, try again . . .

Achilles pulls the stick back hard --

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL OVER BATTLEFIELD -- SFX
Achilles's plane does a barrel roll and zooms off in pursuit of Alexander, who is headed back to the bleacher area.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAINEE BUNKER -- DAY
The instructor is staring at the screen with a wry frown.

MALE TRAINEE
But sir, we saw him go out of bounds.
He lost!

INSTRUCTOR
(not looking up)
Petra?

PETRA
It's a tradition that goes back before sport, to when fencing was serious. The ref can only judge on things he sees with his own eyes. What he says is final, even when he's wrong.

MALE TRAINEE

They have TV's on their floater.

INSTRUCTOR
True, but they don't rely on them. That's a problem when you're fighting out of sight.

ANOTHER TRAINEE
One guy comes back dead, the other one wins.

INSTRUCTOR
In general. Near the refs, you can lose and still survive, sometimes.
(BEAT)
Watch this.

We look past the instructor to the big monitor. Alexander's plane is hovering ("dancing") in front of the bleacher area.

INSTRUCTOR
(O.S.)
See what's happening . . . Alexander's got a fuel advantage; he can hang there in front of the bleachers as long as he wants.

Achilles comes diving in low, under Alexander, but doesn't dislodge him. Alexander's cannon fire follows him OFF.

INSTRUCTOR
(O.S.)
Achilles doesn't want to shoot in the direction of the bleachers.

PETRA
(O.S.)
Overload?

INSTRUCTOR
(O.S.)
That's right. The force field deflects a certain amount of energy. Too much and it gives up. He can't use the lasers, either.

MALE TRAINEE
Line of sight.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- SFX
Again, Achilles executes a daring swoop, missing Alexander by inches -- and Alexander's plane does make a little dodge.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S PLANE
Achilles looking intense --

TEX
(O.S.)
This ain't gonna work. I think you oughta --

ACHILLES
It's by the book. You always say to go by the book.

TEX
(O.S.)
So sometimes the book's wrong. This guy doesn't have a nerve in his body. He'd rather crash than give up his position --

ACHILLES
Good. So he's gonna crash. And burn.

A cannon salvo rocks the plane.

TEX
(O.S.)
Damn it, Achilles! Get down to yer ground position and wait him out! He comes back, all he's got is feet.

ACHILLES
He comes back, he'll ask for a judgment and delay. Don't want a rematch.

Achilles pushes forward on the stick; SOUND of jet engines increases; ANGLE shifts

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
Not when I can kill him now.

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL BATTLEFIELD -- SFX
Alexander [frantically] shooting at Achilles as he does a kamekazi dive; he actually comes close enough to scrape hulls. Alexander's plane wobbles violently --

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S PLANE
Achilles grinning like a maniac --

TEX
(O.S., strangling)
You hit him! You want to get yourself killed?

ACHILLES
(laughs)
Oh, I just get a little closer every time.

TEX
(O.S.)
Come down!

ACHILLES
This one'll do it.

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL BATTLEFIELD -- SFX
An ANGLE behind Alexander. Shot recreates the helpless tension of WWII Pacific newsreels; the Zero coming in at deck level, miraculously untouched by the concentrated firing --

-- then Alexander zigs when he should have zagged!

CLOSE ON Alexander's plane as they collide. SOUND of crash. Pieces flying --

ANOTHER ANGLE farther away: both planes spinning out of control; pilots ejecting --

EXTREME LONG SHOT on bleachers as Achilles's plane smashes into force field -- it almost stops, as if it were pushing against a strong membrane --

CLOSER ANGLE as it pops through and explodes, engulfing hundreds in a ball of fire!

ANGLE ON Achilles as he dangles from parachute, staring helplessly, horrified. He's bleeding from a head injury.

ANOTHER ANGLE far enough away to show both parachutes drifting down; the bleachers in flames; Alexander's plane crashed and burning some distance away. Faint SOUND of distant flames and screams.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. BLEACHER DISASTER SCENE (ON TV)

Confusion, pain. SOUND of small fires still crackling here and there, the wounded moaning, survivors weeping. White-coated medics shouting orders, running around with stretchers. Victims in body bags. Injured people sitting stunned with makeshift bandages.

The Sportscaster is standing there with a microphone, having his Finest Hour:

SPORTSCASTER
There are no words to describe the mag-ni-tude of this disaster, ladies and gentlemen, no words at all.

In all my years as a reporter --

NEW VOICE (O.S.)
Thank you, Harold. We're switching now to CM Central, where Achilles is ready to make a statement.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESS ROOM -- DAY (ON TV)

Achilles is standing behind a lectern, looking trapped. Matsumoto and Tex sit behind him and to the right. Another man, JOHN JAMESON, sits behind and to his left. Silver-haired, he's wearing a government-gray suit and radiates Importance.

ACHILLES
I . . . I'm sorry it happened. Shouldn't've happened.

He looks at the paper in front of him, makes a helpless gesture, looks toward Jameson, then back toward the camera. He holds up the paper.

ACHILLES (Cont'd.)
They give me this paper to read you, but hell. I'm not much of a reader. Besides, I don't work for them any more.

SOUND of audience's reaction.

ACHILLES (Cont'd.)
I'm retiring as of now. Someone else can take on that crazy son of a bitch.

ANGLE ON Jameson, trying not to show surprise and anger.

ACHILLES (Cont'd.)
Some people'll call me chicken, but that's righty-oh with me. Call me whatever.
(BEAT)
They say it's more than three hundred people killed in this thing. It was my machine that hit them . . .
(quietly)
but it wasn't my fault. What Alexander did was try to use the live audience as hostages. I couldn't do any laser with him in front of them. So I tried to push him away.

Hell. He zigged and I zagged. Force field that protects the bleacher bums, it can only hold so much. Couldn't hold back the weight of the fighter, not even if it was goin' slow.

Achilles looks straight at camera, jaw set.

ACHILLES (Cont'd.)
So I'm sorry. I'm sorrier than I can say. But if you're lookin' for someone to blame, you better try the Confederation camp. Let Alexander explain what happened.

He looks over at Jameson, then looks back at the camera. He starts to say something, shrugs. Walks off.

There's a moment of camera confusion when both Matsumoto and Jameson stand up. At the same time, our view pulls back to show that we're watching TV in the bar.

JAMESON
We perfectly understand how Achilles must feel --

FIRST GUY
Wanna try Channel Two?

Click-click and Jameson is replaced by footage of the fight.

SECOND GUY
So is Achilles a coward or a humanitarian?

BARTENDER
Maybe he's a guy who can count up to twenty without takin' his shoes off. His contract's up; no way they can legally make him fight Alexander.

SECOND GUY
You'd think he'd want to anyhow. I'd be angry as hell.

FIRST GUY
That's why you'd never make a good jock. Achilles don't care one way or the other about those three hundred. Those guys have ice water in their veins.

BARTENDER
Look who's talkin'. Your veins run about twenty percent bourbon.

Second Guy and Bartender laugh.

FIRST GUY
Yeah, but you think I don' know?

SECOND GUY
You're probably right.

FIRST GUY
You know I'm right. He'll take the money and run. Who wouldn't?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE JOCKS' TRAP -- NIGHT
The outside of the saloon where the jocks hang out. Deep snow; it ain't Death Valley. Sporty floaters parked outside. Loud talking, bar SOUNDS.

CLOSE on handwritten sign on the door: "NO CIVILIANS" . . . then TILT down to a printed one: "ABANDON HOPE ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE."

CUT TO:

INT. THE JOCKS' TRAP -- NIGHT
Lights -- smoke -- SOUND of strange music almost drowned out by fifty or sixty people all talking and laughing. About half are professionals (jocks, aides-de-camp like Tex, and trainees) and the other half groupies and hangers-on. The trainees are wearing uniform white coveralls; the jocks wear jumpsuits, red and white for our Common Market guys, black and gold for the Confederation troops.

The ethnic mix of the two teams reflects the world's political division. The Confederation people are Latin American, African, and slavic. The Common Market jocks are Japanese, Western European, and black and white Americans.

It's sort of a Western saloon-type place, sawdust on the floor, long oak bar with a mirror behind it, bartender who looks like King Kong with a shave. In one corner is a pile of broken furniture under the sign "YOU BREAK IT YOU BOUGHT IT."

There's a futuristic video game in one corner. Tex is playing it with a ferocious expression. He's playing it well, although there's a line of three empty glasses next to him, along with a fourth one holding a double whiskey.

ANGLE ON the one quiet group: eight people, jocks and trainees, gathered around a large TV, reviewing the day's fight. One of them is Petra. All the jocks are wearing red and white jump suits, Common Market flag on the breast (circle of yellow stars on a blue field). **JOCK TWO** is a big black man in his late twenties. Weightlifter muscles and a scarred face with studied blank expression.

JOCK ONE
Let's slow it down . . . here.

TV screen shows the scene where Alexander goes out of bounds.

JOCK TWO
Stop it there.

One of the trainees pushes a button: freeze frame.

JOCK TWO (cont'd.)
(turns to the bar and shouts)
Hey! Alexander!

ANGLE ON **ALEXANDER**. He's wearing the black and gold jump suit (short sleeves to show muscle) with his name on the breast pocket, over a flag that sports a red fist clutching a hammer.

His head swivels slowly, like a bear's. He sees the black man. (In the corner, Tex stops playing to watch.)

ALEXANDER
You want something.

JOCK TWO
Need your opinion.

Alexander picks up his drink, hesitates, sets it back down on the bar. He lumbers over.

JOCK TWO
(gestures toward screen)
Now tell us you weren't out of bounds.

Alexander stares at the screen, then at Jock Two. He shrugs, starts to turn --

Jock Two reaches out and touches his shoulder --

JOCK TWO
I just --

Fast as a striking snake, Alexander's fist flies around and smashes into Jock Two's jaw. Exaggerated SOUND; Jock Two crashes up against the wall and slumps unconscious. The bar is silent.

Alexander looks at his knuckles, raises eyebrows slightly. He holds his paw out to the trainee who's got the TV controls.

The trainee hands him the clicker and he restarts the program. He hands the clicker back with grave politeness. The only SOUND in the bar is the Sportscaster quietly blathering.

SERIES OF SHOTS: each of the jocks/trainees who had been watching the fight. Some show respect, some fear, some pokerfaced.

SPORTSCASTER
(O.S.)
-- couldn't swear to it, but from here it looked like Alexander went into the red. Dollars to dildos Achilles is gonna -- yep! Judgment call there, the light's on in the ref's floater . . .

Last SHOT is Petra, her face unreadable as she watches the man walk away. If you could kill someone with mental telepathy, Alexander would be meat.

As Alexander returns to the bar, the bartender passes him, looking grim, carrying a pitcher of water. He flings the water at Jock Two to revive him.

ANGLE ON Alexander at the bar, and the SOUND of the sportscaster diminishes to an unintelligible whisper.

Next to Alexander a small man in the Common Market jumpsuit, **JACQUES**, is intently studying the tumbler of red wine in front of him.

ALEXANDER
Sing.

JACQUES
Pardon?

ALEXANDER
You are French. Sing us a song.

JACQUES
Well, I --

With exaggerated care, Alexander moves the man's glass of wine. Then he grabs him by the shoulders and lifts him like a small child, and sits him on the bar.

ALEXANDER
The one you sang the other night. I liked that. The Knights of the Round Table.

He turns partway around, addressing the other patrons --

ALEXANDER (cont'd.)
A lot of people know that song. Everybody knows that song.

JACQUES
(tentative, a little squeaky)
Les chevaliers du table ronde . . .

One other person joins in, slightly off the beat and also tentative --

JACQUES (cont'd.)
(his voice improving)
second line of song

ALEXANDER
(lifts his glass)
I'll buy a round for anyone who sings.

Three or four other voices join in -- and Alexander, too. He pulls a fistful of currency out of his pocket and hands it to the bartender.

JACQUES
third line of song

ANGLE ON Petra. She isn't singing.

MALE TRAINEE
(to Petra)
You don't know the words?

PETRA
I'm not thirsty.

JACQUES ETC.
4th line

Most of the bar joins in on the chorus. SOUND is muted, though, while Petra and the male trainee talk.

MALE TRAINEE
Think he's coming?

PETRA
Achilles? I don't know. I'm not his keeper.

MALE TRAINEE
Well . . .

PETRA
I haven't even seen him since the . . . disaster. Not for a couple of days before, actually.

MALE TRAINEE
Yeah, I know. They don't like for you to—

PETRA
Silly idea. As if sex would actually slow you down.

Male trainee looks a little embarrassed.

PETRA (cont'd.)
I'd like to be with him now. But I know he needs time to sort things out. What a terrible . . .
(shakes head)

MALE TRAINEE
Is he gonna go for the rematch?

PETRA
He's not under any contractual obligation. I don't think I would.
(she looks toward the bar)
Alexander likes blood too much. I wouldn't want to give him a free chance at me.

MALE TRAINEE
(leans back)
Nobody gets a free chance at you.

PETRA
You're such a gentleman. How can you stand yourself?

CUT TO:

EXT. JOCKS' TRAP -- NIGHT
Achilles approaches the door, hears the singing, hesitates --

CUT TO:

INT. JOCKS' TRAP -- NIGHT
ANGLE ON door as Achilles enters quietly, hangs his thermal jacket up on the wall.

SOUND of singing diminishes dramatically . . . some nonmusical conversation competing --

ACHILLES
(smiles broadly)
Sings chorus

ANGLE ON Petra

PETRA
I don't think that means he's happy.

MALE TRAINEE
Go find out?

PETRA
No. He'll come over.

ANGLE FAVORING Achilles. Singing peters out as Achilles approaches Alexander. People waiting for the fireworks.

Bartender puts a large stein of beer on the bar. Alexander offers it to Achilles.

ALEXANDER
I'm buying, for anyone who sings.

ACHILLES
(BEAT)
Something wrong with my voice.
(Takes beer)
Thanks anyhow.

Achilles takes a step, hesitates, steps back and stuffs a dollar bill into Alexander's breast pocket. Then he continues on to where Petra and the rest of the Common Market team are sitting.

General greetings all around. He gestures at Jock Two, still on the floor, but now snoring, a folded-up towel pillowing his head.

ACHILLES
What's Henry's problem?

JOCK ONE
He touched Alexander.

ACHILLES
Uh oh.
(He drags a chair up next to Petra)
I better watch out.

PETRA
(She doesn't touch him)
How are you doing?

He nods, is silent for a long BEAT.

ACHILLES
Uh . . . not so good.

He looks at the floor, hands clasped tightly in his lap.

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
Three hundred twenty-three people dead.
Twice as many injured.

Petra moves a hand toward him, checks herself.

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
Hell, the Chin-Lemarque disaster wasn't even a hundred. They're still talkin' about that like it was . . .

JOCK ONE
The bleacher bums, they know what they're gettin' into.

From our ANGLE, we don't see Alexander approach.

MALE TRAINEE
They sign that piece of paper.

REVERSE ANGLE, Alexander looming. Tex is behind him, expressionless.

ALEXANDER
And a good thing for you they sign that release, my friend.

ACHILLES
(venomous)
A good thing for me.

Alexander laughs and takes the dollar bill out of his pocket; floats it gently to the table.

ALEXANDER
Here. I understand you're out of work.

He about-faces and walks back toward the bar. Achilles half rises, but Petra restrains him with a touch to his arm.

PETRA
Let him play his silly game.

Achilles nods slowly and eases back into the chair. Still tense. Picks up his beer, doesn't drink.

ACHILLES
They tried to put the error on me.
Did you know that?

FIRST JOCK
What a bucketful.

ACHILLES
There's Alexander . . .
(Looks at Alexander;
raises voice)
using the god damned bleacher bums as a shield --

Alexander responds with an ugly little smile. Achilles sits back, arms folded, smoldering. Tex crosses behind him.

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
-- and they try to give the error
to me.

Tex hooks a chair with his foot, drags it over, sits down across from Achilles.

TEX
So what you gonna do about it?

He looks at Tex for a BEAT and then reaches out to put his finger under Petra's chin.

ACHILLES
There oughta be a law against a brain like this bein' behind a face like this.

PETRA
You should see the rest of my central nervous system.

ACHILLES
So tell me. Nervous system.
(Sits back)
How many jocks survive their first fight? Percent-wise.

PETRA
Seventy-seven percent.

ACHILLES
How many live through their fifth?

PETRA
Of the ones who started, only twelve percent. Of the ones who survive four, though, 88% make it through at least one more.

ACHILLES
Yeah.

PETRA
-- And eight percen: who start
live through six, and five percent
live through seven --

TEX
-- and only two jocks have lived
through eight. You two.

Achilles sips beer thoughtfully.

ACHILLES
Anybody with half a brain would
let Alexander try for nine by himself.
Then ten, and eleven, and however
many it takes for him to crash and burn.

TEX
It's like leaving it unfinished.

ACHILLES
323 dead, Tex. That's a big finish.

TEX
Not your fault.

ACHILLES
Even back when they had wars, you
didn't get to kill 323 people. Except
you drop bombs on them.

TEX
Just put that part outa your mind. You
know how many people get killed
in traffic accidents every day?

ACHILLES
(leans forward)
Of accidents I was in -- none.

JOCK ONE
You know that's just the way he
wants you to think. Blame.

ACHILLES
Yeah.

JOCK ONE
He wants you to be off balance if he does fight you. But mostly he wants you to quit --

PETRA
So he can take on one of us.

ACHILLES
A first-timer? I don't think so.

PETRA
The rules allow it, every other shot.

ACHILLES
Yeah, but he didn't win that one. He has to . . . .

TEX
He has to fight the same jock if the same jock's qualified.

ACHILLES
Well, I'm not qualified! I've done my five years and I'm a free man!

TEX
Like you say.

PETRA
We can take him, Achilles. Don't let that be a factor.

MALE TRAINEE
(ingenuously)
That's right. We're not afraid of him.

ACHILLES
I'm not afraid of him either! I've just done my time.

TEX
He'll retire in eight months himself.
But he'll retire undefeated.

ACHILLES
So I'll take him out to lunch. I'm
undefeated too.

TEX
Not quite the same.

PETRA
(to Achilles)
Don't let him get your goat. You're
right.

TEX
(strangled *argh* sound)
Gawd damn it! Why'd they let
women in this thing?

PETRA
(leaning close enough
to threaten Tex)
Because some women are smarter,
stronger, and faster than some men.

TEX
(rolling eyes)
Of course. How could I forget.
(BEAT)
I need a drink.

He gets up and walks away, not too steadily.

PETRA
He's getting really transparent.
You just do what feels right.

ACHILLES
(watching Tex)
Well, it's hard on him.

ANGLE ON bar as Tex walks up. He seems more sober away from the others. Poisonous look at Petra. Bartender steps toward him.

TEX
Make it a double, Harry.

Bartender pours it and slides it over, then hands him a note.

BARTENDER
Guy left this a minute ago. Didn't wanna bother you.

TEX
'Kay.

He picks up the glass with his right hand and opens the note with his left, reading. Sets the drink back down. Then reads the note again, takes a healthy swig, and leaves the glass on the bar. Heads for the men's room.

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S ROOM -- NIGHT

It has seen cleaner days. Only one stall is occupied; Tex looks at the shoes significantly and turns on a water faucet, loud.

He steps over to the occupied stall and speaks quietly:

TEX
That you, Dmitri?

DMITRI
(Slavic accent)
Of course.

TEX
You know I won't have nothin' for you till Wednesday. Why the hell you come here?

DMITRI
This is not about the . . . about our usual business. There is trouble with Alexander.

TEX
I'm listening.

DMITRI
He insists on fighting Achilles. He thinks that through you we can pressure him.

TEX
Hey. Don't I want him to fight, too? I mean I've spent years settin' this up; I got ev'ry cent I could beg or borrow ridin' Alexander.

DMITRI
This becomes more serious than your personal fortunes. Alexander threatens to go to the International Gaming Commission.

TEX
He'll go to the IGC with proof of –

DMITRI
Yes.

TEX
(BEAT)
Can you have him killed?

DMITRI
Not easily. It would look suspicious.

TEX
God. I'll see what I can do. See if I can get Matsumoto to help.

DMITRI
I was under the impression that Matsumoto could not be corrupted.

TEX
He can't.
(wheels turning)
But he wants to win as much as anybody. Long as he thinks Achilles'll give his hardware the best shot. See what I can set up.

DMITRI
Please do. Your money is important, but I have rather more than money at stake here.

TEX
Yeah, I know.

DMITRI
We don't care whether Alexander fights Achilles or Svetlana fights you. We want Alaska.

It's not the man, anyhow. It's the robot. Give us an assurance that the CM robot will fail at the right time, and we will --

Somebody opens the door to the men's room; Tex turns toward the urinal.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE JOCKS' TRAP -- NIGHT
The door opens and Achilles and Petra come out. Achilles has hands in pockets, looking introspective; Petra's holding his arm.

ACHILLES
Thanks for sticking up for me in there.

PETRA
Well, it's your decision. I hate to see people goading you.

ACHILLES
Yeah.

They walk through the moonlit snowscape for a couple of seconds, in companionable silence.

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
That slav boy has got one bug up his ass for me. He doesn't wanta just win.

PETRA
That's right. The way he sees it, there's nobody else in his league.
(BEAT)
He's wrong. We'll show him.

ACHILLES
Well hell. He could fight a brand-new rookie every time; sooner or later he'll make a slip and get it. He's gotta know that. Law of Averages.

PETRA
There's no such thing as a "Law of Averages" --

ACHILLES
Smarty --

Achilles makes as if to tap her on the chin -- but she's there, and blocks his fist with her palm, with surprising force. (Surprising to the audience, but evidently a routine with them; they don't skip a beat.)

PETRA
-- but that's right. You could fight grandmothers and sooner or later one would kill you. Just walking around in the robot will get you, eventually.

ACHILLES
(nodding, BEAT)
So why the hell do we do it?

Petra stops and grabs Achilles's waistband, pulls him around square with her.

PETRA
I don't know about you. I only joined up because my mother told me jocks were the best lovers in the world.

TIGHT on them as they kiss --

PETRA (Cont'd.)
(husky voice, grinning)
Dear old Mom.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM -- DAY

BCU Petra's face, beaded with sweat, panting, eyes closed. We pull back slowly and see (darn it!) that she's lying supine on a bench, pressing a barbell. She's wearing sexy shimmering tights; her **TRAINER**, a husky gal with a clipboard, wears a tent of a sweatsuit. There are two **ASSISTANTS** standing by, spotting for Petra. Achilles is on a bench in the b.g., watching.

TRAINER
Just one more --

Grunting, Petra forces the heavy weight up.

TRAINER (cont'd.)
Good!

The assistants take the barbell from her and rack it.

ANOTHER ANGLE shows that the gym is full of trainees.

TRAINER (cont'd.)
(checks watch)
Gotta be on the confidence course in thirty minutes. Better put on some mud clothes.

PETRA
Okay.

She sits up on the bench and stretches out her tired muscles, wipes the sweat from her face. It's the rough beginning to a long day, but she's glowing; she gets off on it. She runs off to her locker, just as perky as hell.

ANGLE ON Achilles, watching her go. Complicated expression, affection and envy. Indecision.

ANOTHER ANGLE: enter John Jameson. He's watching Achilles watch Petra.

JAMESON
Excuse me . . .
(Achilles turns)
Could we talk?

ACHILLES
We got nothing to say.

JAMESON
Just hear me out.

Achilles stands up, looks away.

ACHILLES
Talk all you want. I'm going to breakfast.

He starts walking, Jameson in tow. We FOLLOW as they move out of the gym into the bright morning.

JAMESON
I don't suppose I can appeal to your patriotism.

ACHILLES
Patriotism is for civilians.

JAMESON
Did you ever think of the people in Alaska? If Alexander wins . . .

ACHILLES
Oh yeah. Like those poor people in Kampuchea and Magreb. Never thought of that.

JAMESON
It's not the same.

ACHILLES
When I was a kid, Kampuchea and Magreb were on our side. Then they were on their side. Now they're on our side again.

JAMESON
What I mean is --

ACHILLES
What I mean is it's not worth risking my ass for.

JAMESON
Do you have any idea what life would be like for them?

ACHILLES
Pretty rough. They'd have to all eat the same food and wear the same clothes and do what people tell them to do.
(BEAT)
Just like being a jock.

JAMESON
You've got all the answers.

ACHILLES
I got the one answer . . .

They're at the entrance to the mess hall. He suddenly stops, and puts one hand on Jameson's shoulder. Under other circumstances, it might be a friendly gesture.

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
(almost a whisper)
No.

Achilles steps into the men's room, leaving Jameson standing there.

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S ROOM -- DAY
Achilles takes a few steps and staggers, almost falling. Catches the edge of the sink. With a shocked expression he looks at himself in the mirror, and gingerly touches the side of his head (where the wound was).

CUT TO:

EXT. CONFIDENCE COURSE -- DAY
SERIES OF SHOTS (depending on what's available):
Petra swinging on a rope over a mud pit (she makes it, but another trainee is slogging through)
-- climbing an artificial mountain of timbers, sliding down a cable to the ground

-- racing along high parallel bars/monkey bars
-- scrambling up an almost vertical rock face
-- rappelling down
-- running along a track, ahead of the others

(in some of these shots, Achilles is a silent watching presence)

She's nearing the end of the track, well in the lead, eyes closed, head held high, gasping; CLOSE ON her face, smeared with mud and sweat --

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SHOWER ROOM -- DAY

CLOSE ON Petra's face under the hot blast of a needle shower. We pull back to see that she's in the shower room with the other trainees, all male. Nobody makes a big deal of it. She turns off the shower, presses water from her hair. As she steps into the dressing room, Trainer hands her a towel.

TRAINER
Fencing in twelve minutes.

PETRA
Oh yeah.
(shouting back into shower room--)
Mark, you want to do foil with me today?

MARK
(O.S.)
Whip your ass.

PETRA
Sure, like last time.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM

They're sparring fast with foils. He's good but she's better. She nails him flamboyantly and whips off her mask --

PETRA
(grinning)
Five.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIFLE RANGE -- DAY
SOUND of gunfire, rapid machine-gun burst. CLOSE ON Trainer --

TRAINER
(shouts)
Prone!

ANGLE down line of trainees, standing. They all flop onto their bellies and continue firing their futuristic rifles ("bursts of three") --

TRAINER
Sitting!

There's a ballet-like regularity to their motions here: gun barrels straight up for safety, they each pivot around on the left hip and roll into a sitting position, point downrange and continue firing --

Sexy ANGLE ON Petra, intense concentration --

TRAINER
Offhand cyclic!

They stand up smoothly into a crouch, gunstock planted under armpit, firing one continuous burst --

TRAINER
Prone!

They fling themselves to the ground again --

CUT TO:

INT. SWIMMING POOL -- DAY
The same trainees diving into an Olympic-sized pool.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM
Tumbling exercise -- the trainees doing shoulder rolls in unison down parallel mats.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIGHTING PIT -- DAY (sun getting low)
This is like an adult-sized sand box, filled with peat moss to cushion falls.

CLOSE ON Petra, fighting a **GUY** rather larger than she is. He throws her over his shoulder --

LOW ANGLE as Petra lands with a soft thud -- and at the same instant lashes up with her foot, landing a solid kick to the guy's crotch . . .

GUY
(looking chagrined, rather than agonized)
Okay, that's yours. Thank God --

He reaches down to help her up

GUY (cont'd.)
-- for the cup.
(as she rises)
You have the instincts of a --

Holding his wrist, Petra does a judo twist on him, flipping him heavily to the ground

PETRA
(panting, amused)
A history major.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Achilles and Petra in bed together. She's sleeping, exhausted, looking vulnerable: her cheek on his chest, one arm carelessly thrown over him. He is staring at the ceiling.

Without waking her, Achilles gently moves Petra over to her half of the bed. With easy grace he slips out of bed, and pads over to the window.

He pulls the shade to one side and peers out. In the distance we can see the gantry, lit up by floodlights.

He radiates indecision.

SOUND of a soft chime. Achilles steps into the kitchen and palms the phone, which is a small hanging TV receiver. It lights up with the face of Matsumoto.

ACHILLES
It's late.

MATSUMOTO
Necessarily so, for what I want to show you.

ACHILLES
Tonight?

MATSUMOTO
Meet me in half an hour at the Weapons Development Section.

Without answering, Achilles turns off the phone. Stares at the blank screen, then at Petra. Heads for the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. WD SECTION -- NIGHT
In front of an unmarked factory door stand two uniformed armed guards, quite alert. They ignore Matsumoto, who's standing between them peering out into the darkness.

He wears a shimmering holographic ID badge, and holds a similar one.

Enter Achilles.

MATSUMOTO
(holding out badge)
I'm glad you decided to come.

ACHILLES
(doesn't take it)
I haven't decided anything. What do you want?

MATSUMOTO
There are some things you must see. Inside.

Achilles looks stubborn for a moment, then shrugs and takes the badge. Matsumoto punches a combination into the door.

CUT TO:

INT. WD BUILDING -- NIGHT
A huge single-room factory, like the Vehicle Assembly Building at Cape Kennedy. Over to one side, the robot rises almost to the ceiling, but we

never see all of it. (Reserving the shot that reveals its amazing size until later, when the combat begins.)

Achilles and Matsumoto enter, Achilles looking around with undisguised curiosity.

ACHILLES
So this is where all those new gadgets start out.

MATSUMOTO
I believe you are the only pilot who has been allowed to see this.

ACHILLES
Yeah, no jocks allowed. So how come this time?

MATSUMOTO
That should be obvious.

ACHILLES
Trying to talk me into it. Into one more fight.

MATSUMOTO
One or two or three. You're at your peak, Achilles; we have a lot invested in you.

ACHILLES
That's one way of looking at it. The other is that I've been taking chances for you guys for five years, and now I've got a chance to get out with my skin whole.

MATSUMOTO
Perhaps it won't be so great a chance you'll be taking.

ACHILLES
Oh yeah.

MATSUMOTO
That's why I asked you to meet me here. I want to show you the new weapons you'll be using against Alexander.

ACHILLES
Someone will be using.

They've been walking along a metal railing. Matsumoto stops at an open lift, the robot's huge foot in the b.g. They rise up to the level of the robot's arm.

MATSUMOTO
Here, for instance. We'll call this the tangle whip.

Matsumoto fiddles with some controls --

MATSUMOTO (Cont'd.)
Watch now.

The arm makes a fast "wrist-snap" motion and a half-dozen wire cables whip out from a bracelet mount, aiming toward a target post, one of the tall I-beams supporting the ceiling. Crackling blue electric arcs issue from the ends of the cables. They wrap around the target and continue crackling.

ACHILLES
Interesting.

MATSUMOTO
You'll have a burst of a million volts. If there's any way for electricity to get into the enemy robot --

ACHILLES
Fry him alive, yeah. But he's all insulated on the outside.

MATSUMOTO
True. The electricity is only an added feature that might work if the robot's skin is breached. Otherwise, it serves primarily to tangle up his feet.

ACHILLES
Gotta get pretty close.

MATSUMOTO
True. Here's another, also short-distance.

He unhooks a welder's mask from the side of the lift and hands it to Achilles. Then he puts one on himself.

MATSUMOTO (Cont'd.)
This may serve to dazzle your opponent.
We call it the blinder.

He hits a button and a blinding pyrotechnic display suddenly explodes -- a solid wall of coruscating brilliance.

MATSUMOTO (Cont'd.)
Many times brighter than the sun.

ACHILLES
Might be handy. Can't wear this mask
all the time, though.

MATSUMOTO
You don't have to. Your windshield
automatically darkens in response
to this frequency.

ACHILLES
(slowly)
I like it. Hell, if we actually did catch
him off guard . . . that'd be the end
of the fight.

MATSUMOTO
That's right. And I can guarantee it
will surprise him. Only you and I and
Tex know of the weapon's existence.
I wouldn't even have told Tex, but --

ACHILLES
What about the engineers who install it?

MATSUMOTO
I installed it myself, and the tangle whip.
On the plans, they are additional
shielding for wrists and chestplate.

ACHILLES
Won't fool anybody who's really interested.

MATSUMOTO
True. They'll suspect secret weapons. They just won't know what kind.

ACHILLES
Unless it gets leaked again.

MATSUMOTO
It will have to be leaked by you. Or Tex, or me.

ACHILLES
Yeah. Anything more like the hand? I mean things we stole from them?

MATSUMOTO
Unfortunately, no. The man who sold us those plans is . . . no longer with us. He was the only spy we had in Confederation R & D.

ACHILLES
So it's their new tricks versus our new tricks, and everyone gets surprised.

MATSUMOTO
Essentially. Will you do it?

ACHILLES
(Rubs temples)
I don't know. They gave me that piece of paper today --

MATSUMOTO
The Extension of Obligation agreement.

ACHILLES
Whatever you call it. Look, I'm not the world's champion reader. I want to go
(MORE)

ACHILLES (Cont'd.)
home tomorrow, talk the whole thing over with my family.

MATSUMOTO
Then you will know?

ACHILLES
(BEAT)
Yeah. You got any more goodies?

MATSUMOTO
A few things. Mainly elaborations of already existing weapons and defenses.

ACHILLES
Let's see 'em.

CUT TO:

EXT. WD SECTION
Achilles comes out the combination-lock door without Matsumoto. He hands his ID badge to one of the guards; takes a couple of steps toward the darkness. Stretches and yawns -- then slaps a hand to the side of his head and staggers, almost falling down.

GUARD
Sir! Are you all right?

The guard steps toward him but Achilles waves him off.

ACHILLES
Long day. Thanks.

He walks off into the darkness, not too steadily. TIGHT ON guard, looking concerned.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM
Petra is sitting up in bed, reading, a glass of milk beside her. She looks up as Achilles enters.

PETRA
Let me guess. You went to a movie.

ACHILLES
What are you doin' up? Big day tomorrow.

PETRA
They won't tell us what it is.

ACHILLES
Take my word for it.

PETRA
Head still bothering you?

ACHILLES
What head?

PETRA
I thought that might be why you were up. That was a nasty wound.

ACHILLES
(touches the side of his head gently)
Oh that, yeah. It'll be okay.

He starts getting undressed.

ACHILLES (Cont'd.)
Reason I was up was Matsumoto called, tryin' to talk me into extending. Went out and he showed me some stuff.

PETRA
Were you impressed?

ACHILLES
One thing, yeah, the "blinder." It makes this big light, ten times the sun, he says. Blinds Alexander but doesn't affect me.

PETRA
What, it overloads his external opticals?

ACHILLES
I dunno. The other thing was this

(MORE)

ACHILLES (Cont'd.)
"tangle whip" --
(demonstrates with gesture)
it goes in low and tangles up his feet. Zaps a million volts.

PETRA
Either one could kill him.

ACHILLES
Ah. Gadgets. He's gonna have gadgets, too.

PETRA
Like the hand last week.

ACHILLES
Love the hand.

PETRA
So are you going to --

He's standing on one foot to take off a shoe -- and loses balance, crashing against the dresser. She's halfway out of bed --

PETRA (Cont'd.)
Achilles!

ACHILLES
(waving her off)
It's okay. Lost my balance.

PETRA
Yeah, your balance. It's not okay.

ACHILLES
It's just --

PETRA
How can you even think of fighting?

ACHILLES
It's just late. Be all right in the morning.

PETRA
The hell you say. You gave yourself a concussion or some kind of middle ear damage. Better get your head candled.

He continues undressing, nodding.

ACHILLES
Good idea. First thing tomorrow.

PETRA
Promise.

ACHILLES
Sure.
(gets into bed)
Goin' into Chicago in the morning, have my uncle check that extension thing. Maybe go to a civilian doctor.
(head on pillow; closes eyes)
Cut the light and let's get some sleep.

She studies his face, concerned. Turns out the light.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY
The Trainer, in white coveralls now (but still with the omnipresent clipboard) surveys the six people sitting in the front row of the classroom. The five men range in size from bantamweight to Shwartzenegger. Petra is dwarfed by most of them, but looks confident.

TRAINER
So one of you six is going to go in for Achilles. We'll find out which, today.

She walks to the blackboard, picks up a piece of chalk, does something nervous with it.

TRAINER (cont'd.)
This part of your training, testing, is kept secret. I'm not sure why. But you are never to tell another trainee what goes on today.

She draws two squares on the blackboard, and connects them with an arrow.

TRAINER (cont'd.)
Two rooms.
(taps leftmost square)
In this one there's a jungle-gym kind of thing. You have to climb it to the top and go through the door in the ceiling.
(shrugs)
Sounds easy. But it's not standing still. It's trying to shake you off. And it may be very hot, it may be very cold. It may be raining; there may be ice.
(BEAT)
It can kill you.
(taps second square)
Inside this room is a machine. It's like a game machine. But you have to figure out the rules as you go along. Then beat it. Before you lose.

BEAT; ANGLE ON **BIG ROB**

BIG ROB
Can it kill you, too?

ANGLE ON Instructor

INSTRUCTOR
If you're careless.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE OF RATTLE ROOM -- DAY
Sign over the door says **TESTING CHAMBER A**. Couple of medics standing by a gurney. Door opens bang and two more medics come out lugging a stretcher. It's Big Rob, and he's a bloody mess, doubled over wincing in pain. Petra's hovering, obviously wanting to help but trying to stay out of the way.

BIG ROB
(through gritted teeth)
Watch out . . . the ice, Petra. It ices up at the top. Long way . . . to fall . . .

She puts a hand on his as they rig up IV's

PETRA
You'll be okay, Rob.

BIG ROB
(weak smile)
Yeah. Whole body transplant. Crash and burn.

PETRA
Crash and burn.

They take him away. Petra turns and hesitantly steps into the rattle room.

CUT TO:

INT. RATTLE ROOM -- DAY
Glaring white light seems to come from nowhere. A maze of hard chrome tubing crisscrosses from floor to ceiling. We follow Petra's gaze as she looks up -- a black door in the ceiling, chrome pushplate -- and down -- a smear of fresh blood at her feet; bright spatters leading back to the door.

VOICE
(O.S.)
Next trainee.

PETRA
I'm ready.

VOICE
(O.S.)
Stand in the red square.
(she does)
When you hear the chime, grasp the lowest bar and proceed upward.

PETRA

Okay.

She stands there for a long BEAT. Suddenly the lights dim; become red. She rubs her eyes -- loud SOUND of chime -- she leaps up and grabs hold of a bar -- it shakes her loose and she falls heavily to the floor -- loud SOUND of the room rattling -- she jumps up again and this time holds on. Being tossed like a rag doll, she grimly starts to work her way up.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENEMENT -- DAY

It's late afternoon. A futuristic Mercedes "floater" pulls up to the curb in a neighborhood where a Mercedes is obviously a rare event. The kids stop playing in the street to watch as Achilles gets out. Achilles's **MOTHER**, a plump woman with an apron on, comes to the door. Two **KIDS** on the sidewalk get excited when they see who it is.

FIRST KID

It's Jimmy! Jim Lucas!

SECOND KID

Achilles. You better call him Achilles.

ACHILLES

That's right.

(ruffles First Kid's hair)

Tear your head off and make you eat it.

FIRST KID

E-e-ech.

MOTHER

My boy drives a Mercedes now.

ACHILLES

(coming up stairs)

Rented. First of the month, I'll buy a matched set.

They embrace --

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Kitchen is shabby but clean. Mother's stirring a pot on the stove. Seated at the kitchen table are Achilles, his **FATHER**, and his kid brother **TOM**, about twelve. Off to one side **UNCLE HARRY**, pipe and glasses, sits in a tipped-back chair, looking through the agreement that Achilles brought. There's a jug of wine on the table, tumblers for the adults. Tom has a tall glass of Coke. Mother finishes puttering and sits down.

ACHILLES
(to Father)
-- so Tex makes a big deal about the bonus pay. Sure, it looks like a lotta money . . .

FATHER
If you live to spend it.

ACHILLES
If I don't, you all get it.

UNCLE HARRY
(looks over his glasses)
So get in there and fight, boy.

FATHER
So does Tex work for you or the Corporation?

ACHILLES
Sometimes I wonder. Corporation'd sure love to see me crash and burn.
(laughs)
Fifty years of upper-middle pension.

MOTHER
Twelve thousand five a month. It's hard to believe.

TOM
On the shows they say you're a coward. You wanna play it safe.

FATHER
You know about the shows . . .

ACHILLES
They're for the rubes, Tommy.

TOM
I know. But the guys give me a hard time about it.

ACHILLES
Just take down their names. Tell 'em I'm gonna want to keep in practice after I retire.
(BEAT, to Father)
There is more to it. Yeah, I don't like feeling pushed. And five years is plenty. But . . . I would sure like another crack at this guy. Don't like to leave it unfinished.

MOTHER
You don't have to prove anything to anybody.

ACHILLES
Yeah. But there's also the money.

Uncle Harry tips his chair forward with a thump. Crosses over and sets the agreement on the table; pours himself some wine.

UNCLE HARRY
It's essentially what your Tex said it was. At least the numbers.

He goes back for his chair

ACHILLES
For every fight I do, it's an extra fifty thousand and ten percent added on to the pension.

UNCLE HARRY
That's right. But you don't get to choose your opponents. And if you turn one down, you have to pay back all of the extra advance moneys. Start over or quit.

ACHILLES
I could put the fifty thousand advances in the bank -- sit on it, just figure on payin' them back sooner or later. I'd keep the interest.

FATHER
Come on, son. You know you'd spend it.

UNCLE HARRY
That's what they'd be counting on. Since it's untaxable income, you can't put it in escrow; you can't protect it any goddamned way. You do any goddamned thing the government doesn't like, they can attach it all.

ACHILLES
Doesn't sound so hot.

UNCLE HARRY
It's fine as long as you keep fighting; don't quit until they tell you to.

MOTHER
Don't do it. We don't have to be that rich.

FATHER
Your mother's right. They aren't going to let you quit. Keep you fighting till you drop.

ACHILLES
(BEAT)
Except for the one. The one with Alexander.

UNCLE HARRY
Yeah, that's the last paragraph added on here. It's covered by a previous agreement.

ACHILLES
I fight Alexander and win, I can quit free and clear. With fifty thousand extra.

UNCLE HARRY
Tax free.

MOTHER
I still think you should let somebody else fight him. I have a bad feeling about it.

ACHILLES
Did you ever not have a bad feeling about one of my fights?

Achilles stands up abruptly, crosses to stare out the window.

ACHILLES (Cont'd.)
Somebody's gotta fight him. If it's not me . . . I'm a little worried.

FATHER
Petra?

ACHILLES
Yeah. She's tough, but Alexander's the worst. He'd eat her alive.

CUT TO:

INT. RATTLE ROOM -- DAY
Petra's getting near the top. Structure's shaking to beat the band, loud rattling SOUND. CLOSE-UP shows a glaze of ice on the bars.

She struggles to the top bars and kicks up at the door in the ceiling. It swings open with a slam and everything stops: shaking, SOUND; white light comes on again.

CUT TO:

INT. GAME ROOM -- DAY
ANGLE ON the other side of the same door, on the floor of the Game Room. Petra wearily hauls herself through. Stands up and looks around.

The room is featureless except for the game machine. It's bigger than a regular video game; its screen is a deep hologram well. The controls are simple: a joystick sporting a pair of buttons close on either side: red/green and yellow/blue.

A **WOMAN** appears on the screen and speaks (middle-aged, trustworthy):

WOMAN
Please take off your shoes and come stand on the metal plate.

Petra does that, cautiously.

WOMAN (cont'd.)
Please know that I can complete a circuit of ten thousand volts through this plate.

PETRA
How many amps?

WOMAN
I am not programmed to answer that question. You have twenty seconds for the first part. It is easy.

The Woman disappears and is replaced by a shimmering display of colored balls. It is easy; apparently. There are four lines of three balls, each missing one of the four colors.

When Petra jiggles the joystick, a pointer appears. She puts the pointer at the end of each line and pushes the proper button. Balls of the proper color appear.

WOMAN
(O.S.)
Good. Now protect the blue ones. Ten seconds.

Petra hesitates for a moment, and then starts using the pointer to move the balls around. The four blue ones go into a diamond, surrounded by a circle of the others. The Woman is counting down 9-8-7-6-5 as she works.

REVERSE ANGLE on Petra as she finishes the simple defense.

WOMAN (cont'd.)
Very good. Now raise your hands.

CLOSE ON Petra's hands. She raises them up. The joystick-and-buttons combination rotates away, and is replaced by a double joystick. She grasps one with each hand --

and built-in manacles snap shut over her wrists!

WOMAN (cont'd.)
Be very careful now . . . .

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY
Achilles, surrounded by family, punching up a number on a phone with a small screen. Distorted picture of a male **CLERK** appears.

CLERK
Training Headquarters.
(squints into camera)
Achilles?

ACHILLES
Yeah . . .

CLERK
Rotten picture.

ACHILLES
Look, I wanted to check on the trainees. They done yet?

CLERK
Nah. Still in last phase.
(he looks to one side)
Petra got through the rattle room okay, if that's what you want to know. She's in the game room now.

ACHILLES
Good. What about Davies?

CLERK
Big Rob? Not so good. He's in surgery. Bought some in the rattle room.

ACHILLES
Damn. He's out of it?

CLERK
All the way out. Civilian. So's Foreman, broke an elbow on the combat range. Banchik and Nagel got zapped in the game room, but they'll recycle.

ACHILLES
Looks like it's gonna be Petra?

CLERK
Yeah, long as she walks out from the game room under her own power.

ACHILLES
Thanks. Crash and burn.

CLERK
Crash and burn.

Screen goes blank.

MOTHER
Crash and burn?

ACHILLES
Look, I better have dinner some other time. If the traffic's not bad, I could still get back before she finishes.

MOTHER
You said she wasn't expecting you until tonight. She didn't want you to --

ACHILLES
Yeah --
(kisses her on forehead)
Nervous. Gotta run.

He picks up the agreement on the way to the door.

ACHILLES (cont'd)
Call tomorrow. See you in a couple of days.

Achilles exits fast.

UNCLE HARRY
(BEAT)
That boy's got a bad case of it.

MOTHER
Crash and burn?

CUT TO:

EXT. TENEMENT -- DAY
Achilles comes out of the door fast and then stops dead on the stoop. Somebody's dumped garbage all over his car. CHICKEN SHIT scrawled across the windshield in soap.

Achilles looks around ferociously. The street's deserted.

EXT. ACHILLES'S CABIN -- DAY
Almost sundown. Mercedes floats down and Achilles jumps out before it's settled; heads for the door. (The scrawl is CH E T; mostly obliterated by the windshield wipers; a little garbage still adheres to the car.)

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S CABIN -- DAY
OVER-THE-SHOULDER SHOT as Achilles enters, sets the agreement down on a dresser next to the door. There's Petra, sprawled on the bed, flaked out. She looks up sleepily.

PETRA
Hi. Early.

ACHILLES
Did you make it? First?

PETRA
(Thumbs-up sign)
Champ.
(Falls face-first into the pillow; mumbles)
Back rub?

Achilles starts kneading her back. She makes grateful "ouch" noises.

ACHILLES
How'd you like that rattle room?

PETRA
Great way to lose weight. Or your lunch, anyhow. You should've seen Big Rob, he fell.

ACHILLES
Yeah, it's too much of a killer. Game room, too.

PETRA
I don't know. You've got to be able to function inside the robot when it's rattling around. And the game room just tests how well you can think on your feet.
(sleepily)
Rules do change every time you fight.

ACHILLES
Good to see you're okay.
(pulls spread over her and stands up)
I should let you take a nap.

PETRA
Yeah. Big fight tomorrow.

ACHILLES
(BEAT)
Uh . . . no.

PETRA
Today's Friday, isn't --
(suddenly awake)
What do you mean.

ACHILLES
I've got to do it. Got to take Alexander out.

She stares open-mouthed for a BEAT. Sits up.

PETRA
Why do you think I --

ACHILLES
You did a good job; I'm proud of you.
(hand on doorknob)
But don't try to talk me out of it.
My mind's made up.

PETRA
(as he EXITS)
Your mind? You . . .

We FOLLOW her as she vaults out of bed and runs to the door.

PETRA (cont'd.)
Achilles!

Past her, we see his retreating back --

ACHILLES
Be in the gym. Gotta tone up.
(starts jogging)

She turns around, tight-lipped, furious. To her right is the dresser; in frustration, she bangs her fist on it, and looks up to the ceiling --

PETRA
His mind!

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS showing Achilles working out. The guy is serious. He's also obviously in better shape for the fight than any of the trainees. It's getting darker.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S CABIN -- NIGHT
Petra brooding, thinking. Something occurs to her. She walks across to a closet and rummages through a jewelry box. Takes out a thick metal choker and puts it on.

TIGHT on the choker, not ignoring Petra's cleavage. She turns what looks like a decoration, and it goes click.

PETRA
Testing. One, two, three.

It's not her voice! It's a woman with a sweet childish soprano. She clicks it again.

PETRA
(tenor man's voice)
Testing. One, two three.

Click --

PETRA
(baritone man's voice)
Testing. One, two three.

Click --

PETRA
(scratchy bass)
Testing. One, two three.
(laughs)
Doctor Martinson, I presume.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHARMACY -- NIGHT
Sign on door says that the pharmacy is open 0900-1900. Instead of a lock, there's a number pad. Petra steps up and punches in a six-digit code. The door talks back:

COMPUTER VOICE
Identify yourself.

PETRA
Dr. Martinson.

COMPUTER VOICE
Please use the Emergency Room, Doctor.
I won't be open until nine.

PETRA
Have to use references.
Extended PDR.

The door goes "click" and opens. It doesn't look much like a pharmacy -- no rows of bottles and vials. Just a small room with some machinery at one end, and a computer and bookshelf at the other.

We FOLLOW as Petra goes straight to a large volume that lies open on the bookshelf, finds the right page, runs her finger down the column . . .

PETRA
Ah.

She crosses to the computer, turns it on and types in **MYERDOL 50 MG/20.**

COMPUTER VOICE
That's a large dosage.

PETRA
It's for trainee Robert Davies. Injuries sustained during testing.

COMPUTER VOICE
Trainee Davies is currently in Intensive Care.

PETRA
That is correct.

COMPUTER VOICE
(hesitates)
Advise Trainee Davies to abstain from alcohol while taking this drug. They synergize. Even a trace of alcohol in the system will cause drowsiness. Taken together, they will result in many hours of unconsciousness, regardless of need for sleep.

PETRA
I know. I'll tell him.

ANGLE ON the machine at the other end of the room. Rattle click slide thump, and we have a bottle of pills.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM -- NIGHT
Tex is sitting on a bench, wearing Stetson and sweatsuit. He yawns.

TEX
'Bout enough, Ace?

ANOTHER ANGLE shows Achilles in the Nautilus machine. He stops.

ACHILLES
Enough of this, maybe.
(rises)
Feel like moving around more.

TEX
(gets up tiredly)
Let's check.

They go to a black-box machine and attach electrodes to Achilles here and there. Tex reads the dials.

TEX (cont'd.)
Sure. You ought to be good for another hour or so.
(yawns)

ACHILLES
Why don't you go on home. Big day tomorrow.

TEX
You'll do what the monitor says?

ACHILLES
Promise.

TEX
Okay.
(crosses, stops at door)
Proud of you, boy.

Achilles gives the thumbs-up sign --

CUT TO:

INT. TEX'S FLAT -- NIGHT
Pretty comfortable place, decorated Western-style. Tex enters and scales his hat across the room. It misses the hatrack; he shrugs and goes on into the kitchen.

He opens a beer, then hears a knock at the door. Checks his watch and frowns. We FOLLOW as he crosses to open the door.

It is DMITRI, a short dapper fellow. Tex all but hauls him in bodily; slams door right behind him.

DMITRI
Don't worry. I was not followed.

TEX
God knows who's watching me,
though. What's so important?

DMITRI
I'm sorry. I have my orders.

TEX
Orders.

DMITRI
Just a last-minute check. You are
certain that it will be Achilles tomorrow?

TEX
Yep. He's got an extra reason now.
If he dropped out, his girl friend
Petra'd have to take Alexander.

He'd go in there with a broken leg
if he had to.

DMITRI
His motivation is immaterial to me. I
only need assurance that whoever is
in that robot thinks he knows how the
new things work.

TEX
Matsumoto played right into our hands
for that.

DMITRI
And there aren't any further weapon or
defense developments?

TEX
You'd be the first to know, pal.

DMITRI
All right. We're prepared for the
ones you already told us about.

TEX
You better be. Achilles is as hot as I've ever seen him.

DMITRI
Good. The better the fight, the less reason for anyone to suspect.

TEX
Right.

DMITRI
(BEAT)
I should leave then.

TEX
(salutes him with beer can)
Right.

Tex watches him leave, smiling.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Outside of rattle room. Achilles is jogging along, carrying the black box. He goes by a door marked **CONTROL ROOM** (with an appropriate logo). The door is slightly ajar. He slows down, returns, walks in.

There's a large blank video screen and a simple control panel. He fiddles and the screen comes on, showing the rattle room maze. Fiddles some more and the maze begins to shake.

A few moments of child-like fascination, turning the room on and off. He leaves it on, smiling, and EXITS. We FOLLOW him next door [**TESTING CHAMBER A**], and inside the rattle room.

He grabs the bottom rung and starts working his way up. After a couple of seconds, though, he stops. He's just hanging on. CLOSE ON his face; he definitely has Excedrin Headache #666. He grabs the side of his head with his right hand, then loses grip and falls. Crawls toward the door.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S CABIN -- NIGHT

Achilles enters, panting, and turns on the light. Petra looks up sleepily, sexy in a careless way, rubs her eyes -- and suddenly comes awake as she sees the look on Achilles's face.

PETRA
What's wrong?

ACHILLES
(setting machine down)
You gotta help me read this thing.

She comes over to him, running fingers through her hair, rubbing her face awake.

PETRA
You know how to read the pulse
and blood pressure . . .

ACHILLES
Yeah, but this is words.

PETRA
You hurt yourself.

ACHILLES
Ah . . .

PETRA
Where?

ACHILLES
I don't know. I get the red lights
and a bunch of long words.

She puts a few electrodes on various places. Clicks switches, adjusts dials, peers at the machine --

PETRA
It's like I told you. "Mild concussion,"
it says. "Medical evaluation imperative."

ACHILLES
Mild.

PETRA
You're lucky it's not a skull fracture. Not
that extensive brain damage would make
you any less charming.

ACHILLES
Yeah. Well, thanks.
(pulling electrodes off)
Glad it's nothing serious.

PETRA
I didn't say it wasn't serious. You shouldn't be out jogging and lifting weights. You sure as hell aren't fighting tomorrow.

ACHILLES
(almost silent)
Hah.

PETRA
You are going to the doctor; make sure you don't have a subdural hematoma.

ACHILLES
And you?

PETRA
Do what I'm paid for. Trained for.

ACHILLES
Not with Alexander, you aren't.

PETRA
I am.

ACHILLES
(struggling with temper)
No . . .

PETRA
Be realistic.

ACHILLES
(losing it)
I'm going to fight him!

Petra is starting to seethe herself -- but she suddenly calms.

PETRA
All right. No point in our getting all worked up over it. No way I can --

ACHILLES
No!

PETRA
(placating gesture)
Okay, then. What you need more than anything else is sleep. Maybe you'll be all right in the morning.

ACHILLES
I will.

PETRA
So let's kiss and make up, have a glass of wine, get a good night's sleep.

ACHILLES
Thanks.

He gives her a peck of a kiss and heads for the bathroom.

ACHILLES (Cont'd.)
I'll take milk.

PETRA
No, you better have wine.
(thinking fast as she crosses to refrigerator)
The butterfat wouldn't do you any good with a concussion.

ACHILLES
(O.S., starting to brush teeth)
Whatever you say, Boss.

Petra takes the pill bottle from a drawer and shakes out two capsules. Opens them into a wine glass, takes a bottle of wine from the fridge and pours. Starts to pour herself one, then switches to a different-shaped glass.

She sets the glasses on end tables on either side of the bed, and gets in.

Achilles comes out, yawns and stretches, gets into bed.

ACHILLES
God, I'm tired.

PETRA
(picks up glass)
Down the hatch.

ACHILLES
No thanks. Don't need it.

PETRA
Come on. Don't make me drink alone.

He raises himself up on one elbow

ACHILLES
Woman . . .

He picks up the glass and looks at it for a long moment, then holds it up in a toast --

ACHILLES (Cont'd.)
(gently, smiling)
Death to our enemies.

PETRA
And taxes.

They clink glasses and drain them. Achilles crashes back onto the pillow in exaggerated exhaustion. Petra leans over next to him.

PETRA
Whatever happens tomorrow . . .
(strokes face)
I love you for putting your ass
on the line for me.

ACHILLES
(mumbling)
You'd do the same for me.

PETRA
(taps knuckles on his cheek, whispers)
Crash and burn.

ACHILLES
Crashaburr . . . .

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. AMERICAN BASE -- DAY
LONG SHOT of sun just coming up behind gantry.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S CABIN -- DAY
Achilles zonked out and snoring. Petra gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMERICAN BASE -- DAY
Barely dawn. Door opens in shadow and Petra comes out, dressed in a full fighting suit, oxygen gear and all. Hair in a tight bun. CLOSE-UP reveals that she's still wearing the voice-modifying necklace. She touches it, click.

Mumbles something too low for us to hear. Then she looks around cautiously and puts on a space suit-type helmet.

She walks down the path that Achilles, Matsumoto, and Tex did a week before, but she doesn't call the gantry elevator. Instead, she vaults the waist-high fence there, and approaches the robot's foot.

GUARD
(O.S., amplified)
Halt! Who goes there?

Petra looks up and speaks with Achilles's voice.

PETRA
(also amplified)
Just me, Shawn.

We switch to the guard's POV -- high up enough so that the difference in size between Achilles and Petra wouldn't be obvious.

GUARD
Oh, hi, Achilles. Checkin' it out?

Back to Petra as she approaches the door in the foot.

PETRA
No such thing as too careful.

GUARD
(O.S.)
That's a positive.

She punches a series of digits into the touch pad by the door.

DOOR
Voice check.

PETRA
James Lucas. Fighting name Achilles.

DOOR
Repeat.

PETRA
James Lucas. Achilles. I have a little head cold.

DOOR
Within parameters.

The door slides open. High ANGLE inside the leg as she comes in and closes the door by palming a button.

CLOSE on her as she takes off her helmet and scrutinizes the button. From a small toolbox on her hip she takes a power screwdriver and undoes its housing. Snips one wire. Nobody's coming in after her that way.

The leg is a narrow cylinder, like a confining silo. There's a scary kind of elevator, as you sometimes see in factories or on construction sites: a geared chain with handholds and footholds every five feet or so. She grabs hold and the elevator immediately turns itself on, takes her up.

MOVING with her as she grinds her way up. The interior of the robot is reminiscent of the rattle room.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT -- DAY

A familiar ANGLE from the earlier fight scene. Through the windshield we see the sun coming up over the American base and Death Valley. A hatch in the floor opens and Petra hauls herself in. She looks around, and then settles into the seat and hooks up the waldos.

MATSUMOTO
(O.S.)
Achilles! This is Dr. Matsumoto! What are you doing in there?

PETRA
(smiling, Achilles's voice)
Hooking myself up.

MATSUMOTO
You're due in the Ready Room in fifteen minutes.

PETRA
Not gonna be any Ready Room. Not gonna be any gantry. This is my last one, and we're doing it my way.

MATSUMOTO
Your way?

PETRA
Don't need the Ready Room. I can calibrate up here to three nines, that's plenty. Ask Tex.

TEX
(O.S., slowly)
That's right. But you oughta'd cleared it with me.

PETRA
You would've said no.

MATSUMOTO
You have to come down.

PETRA
I don't have to do anything but
get Alexander.

MATSUMOTO
I'll send somebody for you.

PETRA
Try. I disabled the door.

MATSUMOTO ------*along with*---------PETRA
Achilles, that robot is not your property! Come back down here and --

Been nice talking, Matsumoto. I'll be in touch.

She turns him off. Changes channel.

PETRA
Ready Room, you want to slave
me into your calibrator?

VOICE
(O.S.)
Sure . . . thanks, Achilles.

PETRA
Yeah. Less bullshit the better.
They sure as hell can't fire me.

SOUND of chime --

TEX
(O.S.)
Security channel.

PETRA
Go ahead.

TEX
Okay, you made your point.
You wanta know how to
activate the new weapons?

PETRA
Yeah, the . . . tangle whip.
Where's that?

TEX
All the new ones are controlled through the mode switches.

ANGLE ON the mode switch selector as he talks --

TEX (Cont'd.)
Underneath the selector box there's a toggle switch.

She reaches under and feels it --

TEX (Cont'd.)
Toward you is regular; away uses the mode settings to select the new weapons.

"One" is the tangle whip. You just aim it with the crosshairs. "Two" is the tar spray, likewise crosshairs. "Three" is the blinder; you can only use that once. So --

MATSUMOTO
Do not touch "Four" under any circumstances. It could destroy the robot.

TEX
I was gettin' to that. You got 'em?

PETRA
One, tangle whip; two, tar spray; three, blinder. Don't touch four.

TEX
Good.

PETRA
Over and out.

CUT TO:

EXT. GANTRY SCENE

Petra putting the robot through its paces. A tricky SERIES OF SHOTS -- we never see the whole robot, so as to downplay the impression of its size for a minute.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR -- DAY

Same cast of characters, but the Bartender is sitting down with a cup of coffee. First Guy and Second Guy also have coffee. TV in b.g. shows Petra working out.

SECOND GUY
How 'bout a shot with this, Tim?

BARTENDER
Can't serve till eleven.

SECOND GUY
Come on, they can do the fights in the middle of the night, you can --

BARTENDER
I don't have to play the East Coast. Don't have Bowl games to compete with.

He reaches under the bar and takes out a bottle, pours a splash into Second Guy's cup.

BARTENDER (cont'd.)
Don't say I never did you for nothin'. Matty?
(First Guy smiles and shakes his head no)
So it's gonna be Alexander again this time?

SECOND GUY
I get conflictin' reports. You know it's gonna be Achilles in there.

BARTENDER
I thought he done his five years. Gonna be some second-string new guy.

SECOND GUY
New girl. But he opted for it last minute, yesterday. Grudge match.

BARTENDER
(disgusted noise)
You couldn't get me to --

FIRST GUY
Okay. Here comes Alexander.

They look toward the TV -- we see a high aerial shot of Alexander zooming down.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY
From a low ANGLE, Achilles's robot is monumentally impressive, twice as big as the last one. The Earth shakes as she walks away from the gantry area. The SOUND of Alexander's braking jets gets louder and louder. Petra stops and cranes her neck, looking up as he comes in.

Surprise! Alexander's robot is more than twice as big as Achilles's. It lands and unfolds into a huge centaur configuration: four heavy legs supporting a trunk with humanoid arms.

PETRA
I love your new outfit.

Alexander answers with a huge cannon salvo. Nothing touches Petra, but explosions from the rounds that are deflected downward make impressive fountains of earth. Obviously a lot more powerful than last time.

He follows that immediately with a steady stream of tracers from a cluster of "minigun"-type gatlings.

ALEXANDER
You're falling behind, Achilles.

PETRA
All right.

Petra's cannon salvo is also impressive -- but it's not aimed at Alexander. She concentrates on the ground underneath Alexander's front feet. Chain of deep craters forms, and Alexander lurches into it.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
Petra reaches under the control box and clicks the toggle.

PETRA
(*sotto voce*)
Tar spray.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD
CLOSE ON the chest of Achilles's robot. A plate slides away to reveal a thick spout. It retracts slightly, and then with a loud SOUND it discharges a fat spray of greasy black tar --

From ANOTHER ANGLE we see the gout of tar heading toward Alexander. But at the last moment the robot spews forth a wide bright fan of flame, instantly consuming the tar.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNKER -- DAY
CLOSE on Matsumoto, reacting with horror!

MATSUMOTO
No! They were ready for it!

TEX
(less upset)
Hell. Could be a coincidence.
We'll see how the others work.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD
Another ANGLE, low behind Achilles's robot. Alexander's regains footing and advances, towering. Concentrated green laser fire, to no effect.

ALEXANDER
Won't work, Achilles. We figured
the laser out.

Higher ANGLE: she tries the crater gambit again, blowing holes in front of him. He leaps back with surprising agility.

ALEXANDER (cont'd.)
And that will only work once --

He springs over the craters and scuttles toward her -- her guns screaming at a cyclic rate, cannon firing as fast as they can, rockets swooshing -- but everything is deflected. In three leaps he's on her. He grabs an arm and the firing stops.

Her other fist comes around and crashes against his side, to no apparent effect. He laughs and throws her. She crashes to the ground about a hundred yards away. Gamely, she gets back up and charges toward him.

He punches, she ducks. She kicks one leg out from under him -- wrong move against a quadraped; she's momentarily more unbalanced than he is. He gives her a good whomp and she's down like an Edsel.

She tries to get up but he's on her, holding her down with front foot and left arm while the right fist slams again and again, huge jackhammer blows.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT

Petra is rattling around in the cockpit as Alexander pummels her, but she's in control -- we know how well she works under these conditions -- and she calmly grabs a pull-bar beside the seat --

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

CLOSE ON Alexander's left arm. Her buzzsaw deploys, much bigger this time, and sparkling with some kind of jeweled blade. It goes through the middle of his forearm in less than a second, bright spray of sparks and drops of molten metal. SOUND an ungodly screech.

Alexander backpedals fast, stumbling over his many feet. He even loses balance and sits down heavily. Stares at the stump of his arm. ANGLE past him shows Petra struggling back to her feet --

With a blood-curdling growl, he's up and charging like a werewolf on benzedrine!

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT

CLOSE ON selector box; Petra toggles #1 --

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

The tangle whip leaps out and whirls crackling toward the robot's legs. But a long blade flicks out of Alexander's wrist and severs the cable. The weapon flops to the ground, impotent.

Alexander circles Petra warily. Suddenly he leaps and crashes into her, knocking her back to the ground. Again the pounding. The buzz saw comes out, but he bats it away with his stump -- it can't work without the element of surprise; it doesn't move fast enough.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S CABIN

SOUND of battle very faint and far away. Achilles is in the same comatose posture as we saw him before.

CLOSE-UP: one bleary eye opens. He drags his arm up and looks at his watch.

ANGLE showing light coming through the window. He suddenly sits up.

ACHILLES
My God!

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT

Petra is still strapped in, but she's obviously getting the worst of it. The windshield is cracked and there's a spatter of blood on her face. She gropes for the controls but can't hold on to anything because of the constant pummeling.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S CABIN

Achilles also groping; he finds the videocube controls. Clicks the set on --

ANGLE ON set --

SPORTSCASTER
Looks like this is the end for Achilles. The refs should call it any time now.

Achilles tried a whole grab bag of new tricks, but to no avail. Alexander was ready for everything.

A clear-cut case of "their spies are better than our spies," it seems to me.

REACTION SHOT --

ACHILLES
(snarling)
Tex . . .

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER'S ROBOT -- DAY

Alexander's face contorted with rage as his right fist rises and falls, guiding the robot's fist. SOUND of a loud buzzer.

REFEREE
(O.S.)
Your opponent is unconscious.
Wait for judgment.

Alexander glares at the thumbs up/thumbs down light on his console. It flickers more and more slowly . . . and stops thumbs down.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S CABIN

Same ANGLE ON set. Its picture is a slow agonizing zoom toward Achilles's robot's cockpit, as Alexander's foot raises up --

It's Petra, her bloody face against the clear plastic!

Achilles has just put on his trousers. He sees Petra and races for the door. It's locked! He runs across the room and dives for the window --

CUT TO:

EXT. ACHILLES'S CABIN -- DAY

Achilles dives through the window in a spray of broken glass and fluttering curtain. Lands on his feet and running.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER'S ROBOT

Alexander also zooms in and sees Petra. Reaction shot.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Low ANGLE, close to Petra's POV. Alexander's hovering foot moves to one side.

ALEXANDER
What is this? Where is that coward
Achilles?

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD -- DAY

We FOLLOW as Achilles runs down the road toward the gantry, getting into his shirt as he runs. He is one fast dude.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNKER

Matsumoto is staring at the screen, unbelieving. He picks up the microphone.

MATSUMOTO
(slowly; stunned)
Get me the referee station.

REF
(O.S.)
Station here.

MATSUMOTO
I demand a rematch. Somehow my opponents have . . . someone has . . .
(emotions catching up)
That is not our fighter in there!
That is not Achilles!

Behind Matsumoto, we see Tex leave the bunker.

REF
(O.S.)
Identity of the fighters is not our responsibility. The match was fair; a judgment has been delivered.

CUT TO:

EXT. AID STATION -- DAY

A medic's "floater"; kind of a futuristic jeep without wheels, white with red crosses. Doorless, like a military jeep. Two **MEDICS** are staring intently at the battlefield. One of them, the driver, speaks into a mike.

FIRST MEDIC
(into mike)
Soon as you say the word, Chief.

As Tex walks up behind them --

SECOND MEDIC
(musing)
God damn. It ain't Achilles.

Tex walks up, obviously thinking furiously.

SECOND MEDIC (Cont'd.)
Oh -- hi, Tex. What's goin' on?

TEX
Beats the hell out of me. Where's Achilles?

SECOND MEDIC
Thought it was Achilles. Robot shouldn't've let anybody else in.

TEX
I know. That damn Petra psyched it out. Some kinda voice thing, I guess --

While he's talking, we switch to REVERSE ANGLE and see Achilles vault the fence behind them. He leaps onto the back of the floater, which rocks with the sudden impact.

ACHILLES
Go go go!

The first medic starts tentatively for the driver's seat. Tex shoves him out of the way and jumps in. Guns it.

CUT TO:

INT. FLOATER -- DAY
Achilles crawling up toward the passenger seat while Tex accelerates.

TEX
What the hell is going on?

ACHILLES
(as he rolls into seat)
I thought you could tell me. What's Petra doin' out there?

CLOSE-UP: Digital speedometer hits seventy; Tex eases off.

TEX
God, I don't know.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

ANGLE favoring **REFEREES'** floater. They are next to Petra's fallen robot, looking up toward Alexander's suspended foot. There are three of them; they look a little exasperated. One with a microphone (the one who had been talking to Matsumoto) shouts up at Alexander.

REF
Judgment has been delivered, Alexander.

ALEXANDER
There is no satisfaction in this. I demand to fight Achilles.

REF
That is not possible. The fight is over.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER'S ROBOT

Alexander sees the distant plume of the approaching floater. He zooms in and sees Achilles riding.

ALEXANDER
Perhaps --

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Previous POV

ALEXANDER (cont'd.)
-- it is not.

One of the other refs points toward the approaching vehicle.

CUT TO:

INT. FLOATER

ACHILLES
I think maybe you do know more than I do.

TEX
What are you talking about . . .

CLOSE-UP: The accelerator pedal. Achilles stomps on Tex's foot.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Previous POV. The ref looks exasperated. He speaks slowly, perhaps with a supercilious edge.

REF
The fight is over. Judgment has been delivered.

CUT TO:

INT. FLOATER

CLOSE-UP: The floorboard. Achilles has the accelerator floored and Tex is braking for all he's worth. SOUND of the floater protesting, metallic howl.

CLOSE-UP: The speedometer. 95 . . . 100 . . . 105 -- Achilles is winning!

ANGLE through windshield. Achilles has one big hand clamped on the steering wheel and with the other has Tex by the throat. Tex has the look of a man who rightly perceives that he's about to meet his maker.

ACHILLES
You bastard. You try to kill me, now you try to kill her.

Tex manages to pull a pistol out of his pocket. Achilles lets go of the steering wheel long enough to grab it and toss it away.

ANOTHER ANGLE. Tex swats at Achilles with his fists. Achilles just smiles.

CLOSE-UP: The speedometer. 120 . . . 125 . . .

VERY CLOSE on TEX --

TEX
Look -- I'll make a deal --

TIGHT TWO SHOT --

ACHILLES
Yeah. I'll make you a deal.

MOVING -- just outside floater -- Achilles heaves Tex out. Dust and blood.

The floater bobs the way floaters will, when you toss somebody out at 130 mph.; kicks up dust, skittering.

A high ANGLE shows Achilles's floater approaching the two robots. Another medic floater is hot on his tail.

ANGLE from behind refs' floater as Achilles comes in hell-for-leather. He slews to a stop by his fallen robot and jumps out. The other medic floater comes in behind him.

Another ANGLE -- the door they use to enter the robot from the gantry. Achilles slaps a plate that says **EMERGENCY ONLY** and the door irises open.

New ANGLE reminds us that we're under Alexander's foot. Medic comes up behind Achilles and looks up anxiously. Achilles drags Petra out.

CLOSE ON Achilles and Petra. While they talk, the Ref is shouting "You are interfering with legal procedure. Cease and desist! There will be grave penalties if you continue with this interference."

Achilles tries to wipe away the blood from the cut on her forehead, smearing it pretty well. Her eyes flutter open.

PETRA
Oh . . . Achilles . . . I'm sorry.

ACHILLES
Yeah, you're pretty sorry. What you go and do that for?

The driver medic comes running up, dragging a light stretcher.

PETRA
Your . . . head . . . the --

Achilles puts a finger to her lips.

FIRST MEDIC
Don't move her any more. She probably has internal injuries.

The two medics extricate her from Achilles's arms.

PETRA
(whispers)
Crash and burn.

ALEXANDER
Have you decided to join us,
Achilles?

ACHILLES
(shouting, shaking fist)
You bastard!

ALEXANDER
Not a coward, though. Where have
you been, while your woman fights
your battles?

REF
Stop that this instant. Alexander,
go back to your --

Low and long ANGLE: Almost casually, Alexander stomps the refs flat. Then he bats at the nearest TV floater as if it were a bug, and swats it out of the air. The others retreat to a safe distance.

ALEXANDER
Well?

Achilles pries his gaze away from the crushed referee floater, and watches for a BEAT as the medic floater makes its getaway with Petra. Then, without a word, he turns his back on Alexander and climbs into the robot.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
We see him enter the cockpit at about a 45-degree angle. With some difficulty he manages to strap himself in and get the waldos hooked up.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD
Achilles's robot gets to its feet like a cross between the Tin Woodsman and a punchdrunk fighter.

ALEXANDER
Whenever you're ready.

Achilles's robot makes a few tentative shake-it-out moves, like an athlete getting the kinks out. He also does a couple of incongruous things, like touching his fingertips together and standing tippy-toe on first one foot, then the other. He gets into a wrestling crouch.

ACHILLES
Let's do it.

Alexander lunges forward and delivers a two-handed blow that's almost enough to end the fight right there. Knocks Achilles teakettle over teakettle.

As Achilles is getting up, Alexander -- bully that he is -- lands another good one. Knocks Achilles another fifty yards or so.

Alexander trots up to deliver the coup de grace, but our boy is ready for him. Alexander raises both fists -- and Achilles lashes out at his knee. Bang, the centaur is knocked off center. He tries to regain his balance, and Achilles smashes the other knee. Alexander tips forward like a metal camel.

This brings him down to Achilles's level! Achilles gets in a couple of really good blows, and it looks as if the tide of the battle has turned . . .

But with a terrible roar, Alexander's robot reconfigures, unfolding upon itself to become a biped nearly three times the size of Achilles.

Achilles backpedals, considers the situation briefly. Alexander comes clomping toward him. No doubt what the outcome of any "hand-to-hand" encounter is going to be.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT

ANGLE from inside Achilles's cockpit as Alexander's robot blocks off the sun. Achilles reaches over and decisively pulls down number 5 on the selector box, labeled CONFIGURATIONS -- MODES 1 2 3 4 5 (with little icons illustrating each configuration, except for 4, which is covered with black tape [1=human, 2=tank, 3=airplane, 5=spaceship]).

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

From behind Alexander, we see the top part of Achilles's robot detach itself and become a space ship, blasting away on twin gouts of flame!
Alexander gropes and swats, but misses the rapidly accelerating craft.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT

Back in Achilles's cockpit, we see Achilles straining under the g-forces while the Earth rapidly drops away. We see the horizon bend around to form a curve; the sky goes from light blue to dark blue to black. The SOUND of the rocket engines fades and is replaced by a loud hissing. ANGLE ON the cracked windshield.

Achilles sees it; tears open a wall-mounted tool kit, takes out a thing like a can of shaving cream. It dispenses a clear gel that hardens over the crack. But this little emergency has given Alexander time to reconfigure, himself -- and in a quick CUT we see him blast off. Achilles drapes a throat mike around his neck.

ACHILLES
Matsumoto. We're in low Earth orbit.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNKER

Matsumoto is trying to look inscrutible. This thing is supposed to be his baby, and it's totally out of control.

MATSUMOTO
How . . . clever of you.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT

ACHILLES
Alexander's maybe a minute away, maybe two. Should I fight or run?

MATSUMOTO
(Slight smile -- what is he up to?)
Listen carefully. If you try to fight in this mode, you will lose. He can outlast you.

ACHILLES
That's what I figured.

MATSUMOTO
But you have a mode nobody knows about. Not even Tex knew about it.

ACHILLES
Good thing.

MATSUMOTO
Yes. This is switch number 4 on the selector box. A submarine mode. You should lure him down to the sea and fight him there.

ACHILLES
Are you crazy? I've never driven a submarine!

MATSUMOTO
If you attempt to fight him in orbit, you will lose.

ACHILLES
Okay. How do I steer it underwater?

MATSUMOTO
(too long a BEAT)
As if it were an airplane. Slower, of course.

Achilles sees Alexander approaching and fires a salvo.

ACHILLES
I get the feeling that nobody's ever tested it.

CUT TO:

EXT. ORBITAL POV -- SFX:
The desert of California rolls along a hundred miles beneath them (they're orbiting east to west; opposite the normal direction). They move in sketchy little straight lines, like water insects. Their silent cannon rounds and tracer fire sail away in graceful parabolas.

MATSUMOTO
You've always been so good with new things.

ACHILLES
God.

Achilles is staying underneath Alexander. A quick CUT to the inside of his cockpit shows Achilles slap a red FULL ACCEL. button. A burst of flame and his space ship shrinks to a dot and disappears, zipping toward the Pacific off Baja.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN SURFACE -- SFX
Still going faster than a speeding bullet, Achilles splashes into the sea.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDERWATER POV -- SFX
As the space ship gently floats downward, it reconfigures into a submarine shape. Once in the proper shape, it stabilizes and begins to move slowly forward and up.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN SURFACE
Alexander's space ship comes down, slows, and hovers hugely over the oil slick that marks where Achilles went in.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER'S ROBOT
He's peering down at the oil slick, nodding in a self-satisfied way.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDERWATER POV
A Poseidon-style missile blasts from the dorsal surface of Achilles's submarine and --

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN SURFACE
-- it leaps the short distance to Alexander's waiting craft. It strikes him off-center with a satisfying explosion (pity it wasn't nuclear) and sends his craft spinning crazily away.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDER'S ROBOT
We see Alexander, for a change, being buffeted around.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN SURFACE
Achilles surfaces, then rises hovering on jets. He reconfigures into an airplane . . .

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
Staring, Achilles zooms in on the Alexander speck. He sees it stop spinning and also reconfigure into an airplane . . .

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN SURFACE
Achilles takes off after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. GANTRY SCENE -- DAY
We look up and see Alexander's airplane come zooming back over the Death Valley battlefield. Achilles follows, and his guns start rattling as soon as he's in legal territory.

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL OVER BATTLEFIELD -- SFX
The dogfight between Achilles and Alexander is unbalanced but not completely one-sided: Alexander is big and heavily armed, but less maneuverable than Achilles (especially with his left whatchamacallit blown away). A bee fighting a bumblebee.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
Achilles talking and maneuvering at the same time.

ACHILLES
Matsumoto! Can I get the tether bomb loose?

MATSUMOTO
(O.S.)
It is not to be deployed while flying. It is for disabling a grounded opponent.

A near miss shakes up Achilles and puts a new crack in the windshield.

ACHILLES
The hell with theory! I need any weapon I can get my hands on!

MATSUMOTO
All right. Press the BOMB RELEASE and the EMERGENCY OVERRIDE at the same time.

Achilles slaps the control panel with both hands --

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL -- CLOSE ON UNDERSIDE/ACHILLES'S ROBOT
An obviously heavy bomb unreels on a cable, swinging.

CUT TO:

INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
Achilles concentrating.

MATSUMOTO
(O.S.)
Try to wrap it around him from underneath. Good luck --

ACHILLES
(turns off mike, sotto voce)
Crash and burn . . .

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL -- OVER BATTLEFIELD
Achilles makes a daring pass straight for Alexander, then pulls up at the last moment. The cable wraps itself around Alexander's craft once -- right on -- and then snaps! The bomb flies away to explode harmlessly. At the same instant, Alexander puts a brace of rockets point-blank into Achilles's midsection.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS:
EXT. AERIAL -- OVER BATTLEFIELD
alternating with
INT. ACHILLES'S ROBOT
Achilles tailspins toward the ground, cockpit swirling with smoke. Fighting the controls, he heroically manages to get the craft under semi-control and crashland it, digging up a certain amount of desert but surviving.

He's a few hundred yards from where they started. The abandoned bottom parts of both robots stand facing each other, force fields shimmering.

Achilles unstraps himself, unplugs the waldos, and kicks open the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Achilles rolls out of the battered cockpit, coughing. Smoke swirls after him. He's still wearing the throat mike --

MATSUMOTO
Situation report . . . Situation report . . .

ACHILLES
(gets coughing under control)
Here's the situation . . . I'm alive. The robot isn't. Crashed. Burning.

MATSUMOTO
Can you get to the undersection . . . the force field?

Following Achilles's gaze, we see Alexander descending, braking like a rocket, fitting neatly into his undersection.

ACHILLES
No way. He's there already.
(starts running)
Try.

We FOLLOW Achilles as he runs toward his robot. It's no use. He covers about half the distance, and then Alexander's robot starts to move.

He fires a rocket salvo, deliberately missing Achilles by a dozen yards, tearing up the ground between him and his robot.

ALEXANDER
You've lost, Achilles.
(sustained burst of machine-gun fire in a circle around him)
That's too easy. I would rather crush you like the insect you are.

Suiting the action to the words, Alexander clumps toward him. We have a SERIES OF SHOTS, a sort of Jack-and-the-beanstalk Mexican Hat Dance, Alexander just missing Achilles time and again.

Finally, Achilles makes a mighty leap and grabs on to Alexander's heel. Alexander stomps once more, and then realizes his quarry is gone. Ludicrously, he looks at the sole of one foot, then the other. Then he shuffles around, squatting, peering.

CLOSE ON Achilles as he sees his chance. He's only a few yards from the amputated wrist of Alexander's robot. We FOLLOW as he leaps and rolls into it.

From inside the hand, he looks cautiously out and sees Alexander trashing what's left of his robot, and bellowing.

ALEXANDER
I know you're hiding around here somewhere. You are a dead man, Achilles. Dead!

There's a jumble of electronic and mechanical parts around Achilles. He looks at it with growing comprehension. The instructions are a confusion of Cyrillic/Spanish/Swahili words and odd symbols, but two things are recognizable: a blank video screen and a joystick control.

He twists two wires together -- sparks and a small shock -- and the video screen turns on, divided by glowing crosshairs for aiming. The picture is of Alexander bending down!

ANGLE from outside, Alexander bending over to pick up the hand.

ALEXANDER
What have we here?

ANGLE inside: Achilles fiddles with the joystick and the crosshairs come to rest on Alexander's cockpit.

CLOSE ON his thumb pressing down on the button on top of the joystick!

Outside ANGLE again. As Alexander is about to pick up the hand, it suddenly rockets straight toward his cockpit. Crash! The fist imbeds itself.

From a long, low ANGLE . . . Alexander's robot is paralyzed in the reaching-down position. With agonizing slowness, it tips over and crashes to the ground.

ANGLE ON the ruin of the cockpit. Dust swirling, but no other motion. Then Achilles rolls out of the fist.

He staggers to his feet and puts his hand to the side of his head. He sits down in the dust, dizzy, exhausted. Head sinks between his knees.

Lo and behold, who should crawl out of the wreck but Alexander. He is also the worse for wear, smeared with blood from a couple of wounds -- but he's obviously in better shape than Achilles. And terminally pissed off.

He picks up a club-shaped piece of scrap and advances on Achilles, sitting there apparently helpless.
Achilles looks up.

ACHILLES
Enough, Alexander.

CLOSE ON Alexander. Expressionless as a robot. He shakes his head "no."

Achilles inches back as he advances. He brings the club down hard, and Achilles rolls away at the last instant.

ACHILLES (cont'd.)
Come on. It's over.

ALEXANDER
No.

He tosses the club away. Picks up Achilles. Throws him on the junkpile, crash. Achilles lies there panting.

ALEXANDER (cont'd.)
Kill you dead.

Alexander advances, muscles bunched, scowling murderously. Achilles inching away --

CLOSE ON Achilles's right hand. Closes on a sharp piece of scrap.

Alexander coming on like the Grim Reaper. He grabs Achilles by both shoulders --

Desperate, Achilles thrusts the "knife" upward with all his strength! Loud raw meat SOUND -- chunk! --

Alexander releases his grip. Looks down at the fatal wound. Collapses.

Achilles just stares.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Achilles enters. He's pretty well bandaged up, but ambulatory. Petra is lying in bed, hurt, vulnerable, more beautiful than we've seen her before.

She looks at him, trembling smile.

PETRA
I -- I've been thinking.

ACHILLES
You're good at that.

He pulls a chair up next to the bed.

PETRA
This is a rough kind of a life.

ACHILLES
Free medical.

PETRA
I have three years left on my contract. Four, five . . . maybe six fights.

ACHILLES
Yeah. I remember the numbers. The odds. Probably die.

PETRA
Uh huh. That hasn't ever bothered me, you know? The dying part?

ACHILLES
Sure I know. You're gonna die whatever.

Be a jock a couple years, got a chance at the good life. And it's fun.

She nods seriously.

PETRA
But it's rough to have someone you love being a fighter. No matter how much she loves it.

He puts a finger on her lips.

ACHILLES
Hold it. I been thinking too. For me it's real work.

PETRA
You aren't going to go along with it. Extend your contract.

ACHILLES
Not exactly. I got a shot at a new job, sounds pretty good.

PETRA
Job? What kind of a job can an ex-jock get?

ACHILLES: Big smile.

CUT TO:

EXT. GANTRY ELEVATOR -- DAY

On the CUT, big SOUND of the gantry elevator clanking to a halt. The door to the robot opens and the tech comes out. We pull BACK and see the three people who came up on the elevator:

Smiling scrutibly, Matsumoto.

Dressed in full gear, Petra.

Wearing the coverall of an aide-de-camp, Achilles.

Petra taps knuckles with the Tech.

TECH
Crash and burn.

PETRA
Crash and burn.

She turns to Achilles and presents her fist. He taps knuckles . . .

ACHILLES
Do it.

FADE OUT